

# The Theological Visions of Mar Ivanios



Editor  
Dr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC

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# **The Theological Visions of Mar Ivanios**

**Editor**  
**Dr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC**

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**Mar Ivanios**  
(1882-1953)



# **The Theological Visions of Mar Ivanios**

## **The Cover Picture**

The cover page is an adaptation of the icon on the sanctuary wall of St. Mary's Metropolitan Church, Pattom, Trivandrum, Kerala. It was painted by Marie Berangere, a French Lady artist. Mar Ivanios is portrayed along with St. Basil whose monastic ideals are at the root of Mar Ivanios' monastic ideals and spirituality.



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## FOREWORD

The great Metropolitan Archbishop Mar Ivanios was one of the leading Churchmen in the last century. The splendour of his saintly life and the depth of his ecclesial and ecclesiastical life become more and more inspiring and striking to the people at large everywhere. The success of the life and message of Mar Ivanios lies in his openness to the Spirit and his complete submission to the will of God and his docility to the Spirit of God. This is the foundation of his spirituality. This gave strength to his convictions. It gave clarity to his vision. It is the strength of his character and integrity of his life. The vision of Mar Ivanios, as we understand today, cannot be narrowed down to any particular branch of theology. His was a historic vision, an integrated understanding of human life on earth. The faith life of Mar Ivanios and his commitment to the Church can be better understood by an evaluation of his theological positions which are none other than the basic tenets of the theology and spirituality of the Malankara Church as evolved in its history. Hence we may point out a few salient points in this regard.

The theological positions of the Malankara Church as an individual Church in the Catholic communion, are built upon the common foundation of revelation given forth in the Holy Scriptures and Apostolic traditions. This is transmitted as a living faith and expressed through her liturgy. The Malankara Church harmoniously blends the ancient apostolic traditions of the Syrian Churches and the Indian religious heritage in its ecclesial life. In this development, the Church has not been much influenced by the Western theological developments that are often dogmatic and less Pneumatic. The apostolic faith has been kept alive and dynamically transmitted through Oriental thought categories and Indian religious genius. In the articulation of its faith, the Malankara Church is informed of the world wide theological

developments through her constant contact with the Universal Church at all levels of its existence. In fact while the Malankara Church seems to be on the conservative line in many aspects it is open to the progressive thinking of the Church in its modern exigencies.

The uniqueness of God's self-revelation through his only Son Jesus Christ is an undisputable article of faith of Christianity and hence of the Malankara Church also. This is communicated through the Church's faith-life and faith-proclamation. The Malankara Church has always respected other religions and appreciated their genuine moral and cultural values. It has also articulated its faith in the culture of the land by imbibing its religio-cultural elements in the Church's liturgy and social life.

The Christology of the Malankara Catholic Church is unfolded in its liturgy. It owes much to the Alexandrian and Antiochene Schools of theology. The person of Jesus Christ as the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity descending from heaven obtains a steady emphasis. The divine person of Christ is the unifying factor of the whole paschal mystery. The suffering of Christ that is part of the paschal mystery is presented always along with his divine glory, which is pre-existent as the Divine Word or as expressed in his glorious resurrection. The simple cross instead of the crucifix that adorns Malankara homes and churches is a symbolic expression of this Christology, a Christology that is centred on the resurrection of the Lord. The three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Most Holy Trinity are worshipped forever. Jesus Christ is the Second Person of this Trinity who descended from his Father to be the giver of the Holy Spirit, and hence acknowledged as the sole mediator between God and man.

For a Malankarite, the Church is the saving presence of God in the world. The mission and ministry of the Son are to be continued by the Holy Spirit in the community of the believers. One encounters Jesus in the community of believers or the Church. This is well expressed in the liturgical hymn: "Let all those who would like to converse with Christ enter the Church, for he abides in it" (see night prayers in the Easter season). The



Malankarites believe strongly that it is not they who constitute the Church but that they are the People of God constituted into his Church by God's grace (Eph. 2:20). It is through the liturgical celebration, especially through the Eucharistic celebration that the Risen Lord is pre-eminently present in the Church. Ecclesial life is Eucharist centred. This is the theological foundation of the passionate attachment of the Malankarites to their liturgical traditions. The Church, in its origin, ministry and destiny is located in the divine economy of salvation, hidden from the ages the will of God and revealed in His only begotten Son, in the fullness of time (Col 1:26, Eph 3:8-9) as Christ himself is presented in the same mystery of God's self-communication.

As regard relations in the Church of God, the Malankarites believe in the communion of all the apostolic communities. It is the inalienable right of every individual local Church to be in communion in the Church of Christ. It is in communion that the individual apostolic Churches cherish its universal ecclesial existence. Thus both the individual and the universal dimensions are protected and complemented. This communion is expressed in the unity of faith and through ecclesiastical communion.

What is enunciated above gives us an orientation of the features of the liturgical theology, spiritual and cultural patrimony of the Indian Church at the dawn of the fifteenth century when the Malankara Church, for that matter, the Indian Church came to contact with the Western Church in a formal way which ended up in a latinisation policy. Resistance to latinisation resulted in the break of communion of St. Thomas Christians. Ever since this break, there were repeated and continued attempts down through the centuries to regain communion. The three-century long attempt was crowned with success on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1930 when Mar Ivanios, the then Archbishop of Bethany entered into communion with the See of Rome. A study of the historical circumstances and documents of reconciliation affirm two important facts: First, the See of Rome acknowledged the apostolic and self-governing ecclesial status of the Malankara Church with its theological, spiritual, disciplinary, liturgical and cultural patrimony; Second, the Malankara Church accepted communion with the Holy See of

Rome and the Bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter the Apostle and Vicar of Christ as a fundamental tenet of its ecclesial faith and existence.

The regaining of communion was realized only partially in the Malankara Church under the leadership of Mar Ivanios. The vision of Mar Ivanios played a vital role in this twentieth century ecclesial movements for communion in the Church. It has set a paradigm of ecclesial communion. Hence it is important to understand in depth and detail the salient features and content of the vision of Mar Ivanios. This would serve as the foundation of theologising in the Malankara Catholic Church. It is a welcome development that such an interest is growing steadily.

The attempt by Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC and his team to bring out the theological content of the vision of Mar Ivanios is praiseworthy and it is a contribution to theologising in the Malankara Church. It is also one of the first fruits of Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth, Pune, the institute of Oriental Theology established in Bethany Ashram, Pune. Bethany Ashram has directly inherited the charism of its founder Mar Ivanios. Hence it is apt and appropriate that Bethany Vedvijnana Peeth has set in motion an endeavour to highlight the visions of Mar Ivanios in the Church.

The authors have chosen seven aspects of the vision of Mar Ivanios. They studied them in depth scanning through the writings of Mar Ivanios. And they succeeded in establishing the profundity of the vision of Mar Ivanios from the original sources. A search into the realms of Oriental theology that nourished the thoughts of Mar Ivanios helps the readers with a clarity of the vision of Mar Ivanios in its theological context. The authors have also tried to compare the vision of Mar Ivanios with the contemporary theological trends and have interpreted it for the present day Church.

At a time when the Malankara Church is engaged in the process of declaring Mar Ivanios a Saint in the Universal Church, studies of this kind are most appropriate and relevant. May God

who inspired us with the spiritual quest and saintly life of Mar Ivanios continue to bless us through his intercession. May this book help the readers to delve into the depth of the visions of Mar Ivanios and understand the ideals manifested in his exemplary life.

With great joy and satisfaction I present this book to the wide range of its readers.

+ Mar Baselios

Archbishop Cyril Mar Baselios  
Metropolitan of the Malankara Catholic Church

Thirusannidhi  
Trivandrum-4





## DEDICATION



Moses led the People of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt. Joshua led them in the Promised Land, the Caanan. Likewise, Mar Ivanios led the Malankara Catholic Church to communion with the Universal Catholic Church. Mar Gregorios led and consolidated the Malankara Catholic Church in Catholic communion.

It is half a century since the demise of Mar Ivanios. It is a decade since the demise of his successor Mar Gregorios. Both are the illustrious sons of the Malankara Catholic Church and of Bethany Ashram. Their visions and leadership nurture the ancient apostolic Malankara Catholic Church today.

Venerating the blessed memory of these two towering saintly personalities, **I dedicate** this book, *The Theological Vision of Mar Ivanios* to the memory of Mar Gregorios in the tenth year of his demise.

Bethany Ashram Generalate  
Kottayam –10  
24<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Fr. George Thomas Kallunkal OIC  
Superior General  
Chancellor, BVP, Pune



## INTRODUCTION

“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.” (Heb 1:1-2) God who spoke to the world through his Son continues to impart his salvific grace to the world through men and women he chooses and commissions in the course of the history of the humankind. He blesses every age through them. Archbishop Mar Ivanios OIC was one such man chosen by God.

Mar Ivanios is known in the Church for his great contribution to “communion” in the Catholic Church. He is eulogised as the prophet of ecclesial communion in the Universal Catholic Church. He is also known as the Father of the Malankara Catholic Church (MCC). His saintly life is part of the spiritual patrimony of the MCC. His theological insights form part of the theological patrimony of the Malankara Catholic Church.

This book seeks to highlight the theological contribution of Mar Ivanios, whose cause of canonisation is now promoted by the MCC. The aim of this book is to explore the visions of Mar Ivanios and share its theological content with the Church in general and the MCC in particular, which has inherited the legacy of the vision.

Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth, Pune, India, is an institute of Oriental studies established in Bethany Ashram Pune - the major seminary of the Order of the Imitation of Christ - and it is an extension centre of Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth Pune, which is a Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion in India. One of the aims of the institute is to develop an Oriental Christian Theology in the context of the Malankara Church. As part of the research studies, in the last academic year, the staff and students of the institute were engaged in the study of the visions of Mar

Ivanios and his theological contribution to the Church. The book, a compendium of seven long articles that are the fruits of the research of a team of seven persons, each one entrusted with a topic for research. The seven worked as a team through group discussions, as well as individually. The papers were later presented at a symposium and were further enriched. To this is added “A Profile of Mar Ivanios” by Fr. Titus John Cheravallil OIC to introduce Mar Ivanios to those to whom he is less known.

Mar Ivanios led a saintly life. He was a mystic. He grew in his mystic experience through *sanyāsa*. *Sanyāsa* was for him a way of God-experience and God-realisation. His life, visions and actions are founded on *sanyāsa*. His *darśana* (vision) emanates from his *sanyāsa*. He shared this *darśana* through the books (about thirty) he had written. You will be much disappointed if you search these books to find out the theologian Mar Ivanios as per modern trend. But, you will be surprised and inspired and look with awe when you see the theology in his *darśanās*.

I am now engaged in locating and collecting the published writings of Mar Ivanios. Most of his works did not bear his name, as was the custom in those days. On behalf of Bethany, his books were printed at Bethany Printing Press that was located at Tiruvalla. The owners of the press have all changed. When Mar Ivanios came off from the Bethany Hills (Mundanmala, Ranni) he did not take any of his belongings with him. With the constant change of residence in the life of Mar Ivanios and in the absence of an archive either of Bethany Ashram or of the Malankara Catholic Church, there isn't a collection of any such books written by Mar Ivanios. The books of Mar Ivanios published through Bethany Publications need a thorough scrutiny to find out the editorial interpolations, etc. To commence this particular research we have the following list of books attributed to Mar Ivanios, out of which, through a critical study, we have to fix up which of them are written by Mar Ivanios and which are not.

1. Alma Prakasam, Tiruvalla, 1926
2. Before God, Tiruvalla, 1926
3. Bethany Constitutions of 1919, 1931, 1938, 1951



4. Bethany Yogam, Tiruvalla, 1929.
5. Bible Stories, 3 Volumes, Tiruvalla, 1934
6. Catechism Books, 9 Volumes, Tiruvalla, 1934
7. Confession of a Penitential Soul, Tiruvalla, 1930
8. Christian Liturgical Year, Tiruvalla, 1926
9. Entry into the Holy Church, Tiruvalla, 1927
10. The First Book of Aramaic, Tiruvalla, 1927
11. Girideepam, Tiruvalla, 1929
12. Handbook of the Holy Mass, New York, 1947
13. Hardhava Prarthana, Tiruvalla, 1927
14. Jeevaparakasam, Tiruvalla, 1923
15. Love of God: 30 meditations, Tiruvalla, 1927
16. "The Malabar Reunion" *Pax* 114 (1931) 1-5
17. Marga Prakasika, Tiruvalla, 1929.
18. Meditations on H. Mass, Tiruvalla, 1923
19. Meditations on Humility, Tiruvalla, 1926
20. Meditations for Holy Week, Tiruvalla, 1926
21. "A New Branch of the Tree of Life: The Syro-Malankara Church" *The Eastern Branches of the Catholic Church*, New York, 1938, 27-35
22. Occasional Prayers, Tiruvalla, 1927
23. Papamochanam, 4 Volumes, Tiruvalla, 1923
24. Prarthana Sahayi, Tiruvalla, 1926
25. Prathidinaprakasam, Tiruvalla, 1926
26. Prayer Book of the Malankarites, Tiruvalla, 1925
27. Rubrics of the Malankara Mass, Tiruvalla, 1941
28. Sanyasa Jeevita Sahayi, Tiruvalla, 1926
29. The Second Book of Aramaic, Tiruvalla, 1949
30. Swargapatha, Tiruvalla, 1929

The authors have made a serious attempt to delve into the available original writings of Mar Ivanios in order to bring out the theological content of his writings. They have employed a scientific approach in this. The visions of Mar Ivanios are compared with the trends in traditional and contemporary

theology. It is also compared with the Oriental and Western theological streams. Hence the methodology is analytico-synthetic and comparative.

The Bibliography with short titles and abbreviations that is given at the end of the book is in fact not an appendix but an integral part of the book as it serves as the primary and secondary sources of this research though for the sake of convenience to the readers, no such categorisation is made. The acknowledgement to quotes and citations with short titles in the footnotes facilitates easy reading and reference.

There are so many people who have contributed their share towards the publication of this book. His Grace Cyril Mar Baselios OIC, the Metropolitan of the Malankara Catholic Church has blessed this book with the Foreword. Very Rev. Fr. George Thomas Kallunkal OIC, the Superior General of the Order of the Imitation of Christ, dedicated this work to the venerable memory of Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios OIC in this tenth year of his demise. The support of Rev. Fr. James Puthuparampil OIC, the present Superior of Bethany Ashram Pune and the Director of Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth was tremendous. He presents this book for you. Rev. Fr. Titus John Cheravallil OIC who wrote "A Profile of Archbishop Mar Ivanios" at the beginning of this book was a constant source of encouragement for me in editing this book. Rev. Fathers Paul Mathew Kaithavana OIC and Varghese Vinayanand Vekkal OIC supported me from the background. My sincere thanks are due to all of them.

Prof. P. E. Daniel deserves my deep gratitude for patiently and meticulously going through the manuscript to better its language. He has put in his linguistic scholarship into this book. Rev. Dr. Santhosh Madathil OIC also deserves my gratitude for thoroughly scrutinising the manuscript. Rev. Bro. Daniel Mannil OIC is heartily thanked for spending time with me for the computer correction of the manuscript. For the printing our thanks are due to Rev. Bro. George Gracious OIC and his team, in Bethany Press, Kottayam. The Bethany Publications undertake the circulation of this book. I thank them in anticipation.

This book is a *Guru Pranāmam*. It happens to be a souvenir of the sacerdotal ordination of the Bethany Ashram Deacons of the year 2004 who are involved in the research and authoring of this book. The *Sishyās* make a *Pranāmam* at the venerable feet of their *Guru* Mar Ivanios before they enter into their religious sacerdotal ministry in the Church. I also thank the new priests for their hard and steadfast work and contribution towards the publication of this book.

Bethany Ashram Pune is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its foundation. This book published from Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth established in Bethany Ashram Pune happily commemorates this event. Let this book be a Jubilee Souvenir as well.

I hope that the publication of this book will be of great benefit to the Church and to the Cause of Canonisation of Mar Ivanios. It will also be a boost to Oriental theological research activities of BVP Pune and a contribution to theologising in the Malankara Church.

Trivandrum 695004  
24 November 2004

**Antony Valiyavilayil OIC**  
**Editor**





## PRESENTATION

I am happy to present this book, *The Theological Visions of Mar Ivanios*, to those who wish to read and emulate the life and visions of the late renowned Archbishop Mar Ivanios OIC. This is the fruit of an arduous endeavour of almost two years of research, discussions and teamwork.

Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth (BVP) Pune, Institute of Oriental Studies undertook this research work as part of its programme of encouraging theologising in the Malankara Church. This initiative deserves particular congratulation and praise. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC was the Director of this Institute, and under his guidance the research started. As he edits and makes available the results of the research on behalf of BVP, I wish that many be benefited from reading this book. Let it augment our trust in the intercession of Mar Ivanios whose cause of canonisation is underway. Let it be a support to the theologising process in BVP and in the Malankara Church.

The Malankara Catholic Church today is what it is owing to the vision and mission of Archbishop Mar Ivanios OIC, who was a pioneer in many vistas of Malankara ecclesial life. His spiritual life, especially his life as a Bethany *sanyāsi* contributed to the spiritual deposit of the Malankara Church. His vision of the Church brought about radical changes in its life. His theological visions form part of the theological patrimony of the Malankara Church. His vision of communion initiated the communion of the Malankara Church with the Universal Catholic Church. His pastoral approaches built up the young Malankara Catholic Church. It is only fitting and proper that Mar Ivanios is called the Father of the Malankara Catholic Church and the Prophet of Communion in the Malankara Church. Hence a deeper understanding of the theological visions of Mar Ivanios is the

foundation of theologising in the Malankara Church. It is very appropriate that BVP Pune could undertake this research.

In many aspects this book is one of the pioneering works of its kind. The research into the visions of Mar Ivanios is centred on sources, namely the written books of Mar Ivanios. Mar Ivanios is less known in this way. He is often known through his biographies. There are more than thirty books that Mar Ivanios himself had written. Apart from these books there are numerous pastoral letters and other speeches that are used in this book. However, it seems to me that the authors cannot claim to have exhaustively made use of the original sources. This leaves scope for further study. This book is a beginning in the right direction.

In the development of the themes, the thread that runs through the pearls, coalescing the thoughts of the authors is the Mar Ivanian vision of communion. For Mar Ivanios, communion is the beginning and end of human life. Human life originates in communion with God, a communion of three persons, the Trinity. It is continued in the Church, the communion of the faithful in Jesus Christ, the 'man-God.' It is actualised at the personal level through a mystic experience, a communion with God through one's daily life. It leads to a cosmic communion and an eschatological communion in Christ. In this respect, Mar Ivanios' vision of communion is all-pervasive.

"The Ecclesial Vision of Mar Ivanios" by Antony Valiyavilayil OIC extracts the ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios from his writings and speeches. Placed on the backdrop of his vision of communion, the author analyses his ecclesial endeavours from a historico-dogmatic and canonical developments in the Church. There is a conscious effort to compare the visions of Mar Ivanios in the light of the historico-ecclesiological developments both in the Occident and in the Orient. The appraisal highlights the originality of the vision and its relevance for the contemporary Church.

"Liturgy is a Means of Union with God: Mar Ivanios' Vision of Liturgy," the article by Kuriakose Kulapurath OIC, shows us

the centrality of liturgy in the life of Mar Ivanios and how he handed it down to the Malankara Church. Liturgy is the life of the ecclesial community. It is the expression of the faith of the Christian community. It is the means by which humans share the divine life, through prayers and praises, the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. Liturgy is the means for union with God. This is well brought out in the article.

“Mariology of Mar Ivanios” by Dayanand Kanangiriyil OIC gives us at hand a study of Mar Ivanios’ vision on Mary in comparison with the Oriental and the contemporary teachings of the Church on Mary. Mary is second only to Jesus Christ in her participation in God’s work of redemption of humankind. She is the sign of hope of the redeemed community, the People of God. She is the prototype and mother of the Church. Mar Ivanios’ vision of Mary’s role in his personal life and spirituality was imbibed from the Oriental theological views of Mary. This is expressed by a number of titles that he uses to address Mary. Through these titles he developed a Mariology in his life and bequeathed it to the Malankara Church.

“Mar Ivanios: A Prophet of Hope” by P. Vineeth Koodapattu OIC presents Mar Ivanios’ eschatological visions. The article brings to lime light, a very important vision of Mar Ivanios that propelled him into action. The author convincingly presents the otherwise difficult to comprehend notion of ‘the-already-not-yet’ dimension of Christian life as expressed in the life of Mar Ivanios. P. Vineeth takes care to compare the vision of Mar Ivanios with the developments in eschatology today to bring out the uniqueness of his vision.

“The Role of Women in the Participatory Church” by Augustine Kavunkal Thengazhikathu OIC is an original presentation and interpretation of the thoughts and activities of Mar Ivanios in the light of the contemporary awareness of the role and participation of women in the Church. This presents the visions of Mar Ivanios as a social reformer.



“The Pastoral Vision of Mar Ivanios” by James Ellitharayil OIC straightforward deals with the pastoral theology of Mar Ivanios as can be extracted from his writings and activities. He sees the pastoral approach of Mar Ivanios emanating from his vision of communion with God, man and the world. It brings into a common focus the theology of Mar Ivanios on education, evangelisation, inculturation and other aspects of ecclesial life.

The foundation of Mar Ivanios’ life is his life of *sanyāsa*. It is in this realm that much has been written. “Mar Ivanios—A Proactive Mystic” by Joseph Menakaliekka helps one to understand Mar Ivanios as a mystic, an image of Mar Ivanios, which we have failed to gaze at the glittering effect of his dazzling personality in ecclesial life.

As already stated, this book is a beginning. Hope it will be a good contribution to understand the mind of Mar Ivanios. It will help us to understand Mar Ivanios as a greater teacher and as father of the Malankara Church. The Malankara Catholic Church, “a tiny sheep fold” was experiencing the wonders God worked for it through the saintly prelates of the Church, especially through Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos of venerable memory. May this book inspire the readers with a better understanding of the patrimony of our Church bequeathed to us through Mar Ivanios.

Bethany Ashram  
Pune 411014  
24 November 2004.

Fr. James Puthuparampil OIC  
Director  
Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth,  
Pune 411014.

# A Profile of Archbishop Mar Ivanios

Titus John Cheravallil OIC

We always come across people and noble souls in history who ennoble their lives by committing themselves to self-negation and prayer. But it is only once in a blue moon that we find lives offered entirely as a living sacrifice, sweet smelling and pleasing to the Master. Archbishop Mar Ivanios OIC is one among them; he experienced divine grace and sustenance at every stage of his life. He was a unique symbol of integration in his own personal life, bringing together also his intellectual, physical and spiritual powers to a unified goal. By the power he acquired through these integrated efforts, he visualized and heralded the integral development of the people of his time. By bringing people back to the true Church, he opened up a new chapter in the history of the Church. A journey through the life of such a personality is indeed a Herculean task. Nevertheless, we try to jot down here the person Mar Ivanios by looking into some of the most important events of his life.

## The Historical Milieu of Mar Ivanios

The Indian Church is fortunate enough to have received the deposit of Christian faith from St. Thomas, the Apostle of Jesus. This faith got rooted in India. As history tells us, the apostolic Church was in communion with the one, apostolic, catholic, holy Church of Christ through out the universe through their immediate communion with the Church of Persia and the Syriac speaking world. The advent of the Western colonial powers, especially the Portuguese, resulted in the latinisation of the Indian Church. In 1653, with the oath of *Koonan Kuriş*,<sup>1</sup> those who declared their

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<sup>1</sup> The oath of the *Koonan Kuriş* or *Koonan Kuriş Sathyam* is the act by which a group of St. Thomas Christians who protested against the latinisation of the St.



dissatisfaction over the latinisation seceded from the Latin Bishops and their jurisdiction. It led to the division of the Christians into two groups, namely the *puthenkūttukār* and *pazhyakūttukār*. The former formed an independent Church, with a bishop consecrated by twelve priests. This action created a schism in Malankara. The latter remained under the administration of the Latin Bishops. Later the *puthenkūttukār*, entered into canonical communion with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. However, *puthenkūttukār* managed to obtain valid episcopacy and apostolic succession through consecration only in 1772. In the course of the three centuries of the history of the Malankara Church after the loss of communion there were several attempts at communion with the Catholic Church. But none of them bore fruit.

## The Rise of Mar Ivanios

It was at this time, that Geevarghese, later, known as Mar Ivanios was born in the family of Panickaruveetil at Mavelikara on 21 September 1882 as the son of Thomas Panicker and Annama. The dedicated parents brought up the child in Christian piety and ecclesial life. Along with his parents, his paternal uncle Skaria Kathanār, a celibate priest of the Jacobite Church, also influenced the child very much to grow in Christian zeal and fervour. During his childhood he had shown an extraordinary inclination for a fervent spiritual life. He was feeling in his bones a hankering to be a celibate priest and a '*Dayarōyo*' as his uncle in whom he found his model for a *Sanyāsi* (religious).

After completing his primary education in 1897 he joined the MD Seminary High School, Kottayam for further studies. It was Pulikottil Mar Dionysius who had made it possible for him to pursue this higher study, which was only a mirage for those who lived away from the cities in those days. As he had an ardent

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Thomas Syrian Christian Church tied a long rope to a cross and holding the rope as sign of touching the cross swore that they will no longer remain under the suzerainty of the Portuguese missionaries. As people thronged on the rope, the cross bent itself. Hence the cross came to be called a bent cross (*Koonan Kuriṣ*) and the act came to be known as *Koonan Kuriṣ Sathyam*.

desire to become a priest, he enjoyed his stay and studies in the MD seminary and successfully completed his high school education in 1899. Seeing the commendable performance of Geevarghese at the matriculation examination Pulikottil Mar Dionysius decided to ordain him right away as a deacon. He was ordained deacon at Puthenkavu on 9.1.1900. As he had shown remarkable intelligence and matching perseverance Pulikottil Mar Dionysius permitted deacon Geevarghese to continue his studies in CMS College, Kottayam. He was then sent to Madras Christian College to do his bachelor's degree with Economics and Indian history as electives. After completing the B.A degree he joined the master's course there and created record by passing MA degree with distinction in 1907.

Geevarghese Semmāssan (Deacon) on his return from Madras was appointed principal of MD Seminary High School. He embarked upon various schemes for renewal within the Malankara Church. He organised basic Church communities and convened conventions; he instructed the people on ecclesial life, especially on sacramental life; it earned for him the popular title *Kūdāsa Semmāssan* (Deacon of the Sacraments).

The Metropolitan Bishop Vattasseril Mar Dionysius ordained Geevargheese Semmāssan a priest, at Parumala on 15 September 1908 in the presence of a large number of priests and Metropolitans. Father P.T. Geevargheese was generally known as 'M.A. Achan' among the faithful, because he was the first among the ordained priests in the Church to have acquired an MA degree. MA Achan soon became a prominent leader in the socio-cultural and religious realm. He proved himself exceptionally capable as an educationalist and an orator. His active ministry and zeal for souls awakened in him a quest to renew the Malankara Church, which was plagued by spiritual decay and degeneration and lust for power. He set out plans and succeeded to give a hierarchical perfection to the Church. He was instrumental in installing the throne of a Catholicos for the Malankara Church on 5 September 1912.

It was at this time that he was called to take up professorship in Serampore College in Calcutta. The thought of leaving his Church caused great pain in him, as he did not wish to be away from the main stream of the Church. But the Spirit of the Lord led him to Serampore.

M.A. Achan's life in Serampore (1913-1919) saw the metamorphosis of his life. He was exposed to the spirituality of the Christian east, especially of St. Basil, and other Christian denominations. He frequently visited Rabindranath Tagore's Santhinikethan, and the Sabarmathi ashram of Mahatma Gandhiji. His discourses with them and the experiences acquired from there enabled him to find the depth of Indian spirituality. He moulded his Christian spirituality touching the soul of the Indian spiritual traditions. His experiments and his vast experience evolved him into a yogi. He was convinced of the fact that a renewal of the Malankara Church was dependent on an inner spiritual renewal of the Church.

He spent days and nights in prayer and contemplation. His initial intention was to organise a group of educated young men and women who would commit themselves to the renewal of the Church. He prayed over it. It dawned on him that an organised group of missionaries would serve better to undertake the evangelisation of India by preaching word of God, a mission, which the Malankara Church had so long, did not seriously undertake. As he was intensely praying over his plans, he came to the insight that "the realisation of God was more sublime than the service of God." This enlightenment changed his life radically. He decided to found a religious community that engaged in the realisation of God in order to set out on the service of God through ecclesial renewal. He and his followers converted their residence in Serampore into a sort of religious house and began to follow a religious order of daily life in the manner of the monastic rules given by St. Basil adapting to the Indian culture. When the time was ripe, and the initial preparations were over, he resigned professorship at the Serampore College and withdrew to the solitude of monastic life. He founded the Order of the Imitation of



Christ or Bethany Ashram at Mundanmala, Perunadu, Ranni, Kerala on 15 August 1919.

Bethany Ashram soon became a source of spiritual life in the Malankara Church. From the Bethany monks and the ashram there blew the wind of spiritual inspiration and change across the Malankara Church. It provided the much needed spiritual fragrance to the Malankara Church. Through his life of prayer and actions he taught his followers that Christian and religious perfection consist in imitating Christ. In 1925 he founded the Bethany Convent for the women religious with the intention of the spiritual empowerment of the women folk.

Bethany was an autonomous body in the Malankara Church. Hence Mar Ivanios was elected to be its Bishop. He was ordained Ramban at Thirumoolapuram on 18 January 1925 and later consecrated Bishop of Bethany at Niranam on 1 May 1925. As a prelude to his consecration, he was asked to sign a document condemning Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon. He had the courage and conviction to refuse such a demand, as he was convinced of the true teachings of the Church. In spite of this refusal, he was consecrated Bishop.

In 1926 the Synod of the Malankara Church that met at Parumala asked Mar Ivanios to commence negotiation with the Holy See of Rome for the communion of the Malankara Church with the Catholic Church. However, the Synod backtracked from its decision later. But Mar Ivanios would not give up the espousal of truth. To achieve the goal of communion, he gave up everything and left Bethany Ashram at Mundanmala with his followers. He stayed at Vennikulam near Tiruvalla. On 20 September 1930 he came into communion with the Catholic Church by making his profession of faith before Bishop Benziger of Kollam who was delegated by Pope Pius XI.

The communion of Mar Ivanios and his followers with the Catholic Church was a historic event of the time, both in the Church and in the world. His communion with the Catholic



Church necessarily took him to Rome and he met Pope Pius XI and received the Pallium from him in April 1932.

Thereafter he was invited to many European countries and universities to explain to them his vision of communion with the Catholic Church. Everywhere he spoke with vigour and courageously explained his conviction. Topics of his speeches ranged from Indian literature to economics and culture. In foreign countries his reunion movement was compared with the Oxford movement started by Henry Newman, Professor of Oxford in the nineteenth century. He came to be called the Newman of India.

On his return from Rome after meeting the Pope, he dedicated every breath of his life towards building up the sprouting Malankara Catholic Church and to the commitment of the Church towards evangelisation. With and the Apostolic Constitution *Christo Pastorum Principi*, the Malankara Catholic Hierarchy was established. The Church flourished in his able leadership.

Mar Ivanios' vision was not confined to the routine steps of establishing churches, organizing worship and enlivening the spiritual atmosphere. The total emancipation of man was his cherished goal for which he saw education as the best means given the socio-economic situation of his days. However, he had to fight battles and face challenges, especially in coming to amicable terms with the government policies on education. He envisioned high schools and colleges. By his relentless perseverance and dynamism he had overcome all the difficulties and established them, many of which have turned out to be premier educational institutions in the State today.

While championing the cause of the Church here in India, he was a much sought after guest in foreign lands on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress, Marian Congress, Jubilee Celebrations, etc. Such invitations took him to the United States, Canada, Australia, etc. This also gave him an opportunity to visit President Trumann of the United States, the UN headquarters, etc. To honour Mar Ivanios and his contribution to humanity, the

University of San Francisco conferred on him an honorary doctorate (LL.D) during his visit to the States.

His strenuous efforts to build up the Malankara Catholic Church out of the void and his engagements for the public good gradually affected his health. The last days of his life started to beckon him to eternal rest. He went for his eternal reward on 15 July 1953. His mortal remains are entombed in St. Mary's Metropolitan Church, Pattom, Trivandrum.

Mar Ivanios is an inspiration to thousands of people who are touched by his saintly life. He is a man chosen by God 'from the womb of his mother.' He is the 'Moses' of Malankara. He is an Apostle of India after St. Thomas. He is the Father of the Malankara Catholic Church. His life is a testimony of this divine election. He was a mystic in God-experience. His conviction that the realisation of God is nobler than the service of God made him a *sanyāsi* and *yōgi*. He shared this charism with others by founding the Bethany religious communities for men and women. This charism expressed itself in the communion movement and the foundation of the Malankara Catholic Church. The growth of the Malankara Catholic Church is the sign and miracle, the Lord gives to his people through the saintly life of Mar Ivanios.



# The Ecclesial Vision of Mar Ivanios

Antony Valiyavilayil OIC

## 0. Introduction

Archbishop Mar Ivanios, widely acclaimed as a prophet of Church communion of the twentieth century, was a man of vision and action. Born and brought up in an era of ecclesial divisions within the St. Thomas Christian community of Kerala, he received God's call to reform the Church from within. In this process he endeavoured to establish an autonomous government for the Orthodox Church by installing a Catholicos as the hierarchical head of the Church. He succeeded in his endeavour. However, later developments proved that it was all in vain. The cordial relation between the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and the Malankara Orthodox Church of Kerala only worsened in due course.

By and by, he was convinced that an educated core group of the Church only could awaken the community out of its spiritual anarchy and lead it out of decadence. With this end in view, he educated quite a number of deacons and laymen including women in the university of Serampore, Kolkotta, where he was professor. This evoked in him a zeal for missionary endeavours and a strong desire to form a missionary society to carry on the missionary and evangelisation work, a divine task entrusted to the St. Thomas Christians as well. He soon began to study and research more



about the spiritual patrimony of the Church. The academic environment invigorated him. He visited a number of Catholic and Protestant religious houses in North India. He read a number of books on religious life, most of which were of Catholic monks. He visited Rabindranath Tagore and the Santhiniketan that he had founded. He made acquaintance with Mahatma Gandhi and visited the Sabarmati Ashram. When he combined the ascetic and missionary zeal of western religious life and the simplicity and craving for God-experience of Indian *sanyāsa* to the soul of oriental monasticism as laid down in the rules of St. Basil, his vision received flesh in the form of the Order of the Imitation Christ or Bethany Ashram which he founded and established on Mundanmala near Perunadu, Ranni. Bethany Ashram and Bethany *Sanyāsis* soon became a source of spiritual renaissance in the Malankara Orthodox Church.

As a matter of fact asceticism leads one to enlightenment through the path of truth. Truth liberates man. The asceticism or *sanyāsa* of Bethany led Mar Ivanios to the way to achieve lasting peace in the Malankara Church torn apart by constant quarrels, litigations and spiritual decadence. He realised that the Church needed a radical healing. This healing could come about only through communion with the Catholic Church, which the Malankara Church had lost a few centuries ago. The Synod of the Orthodox Church held at Parumala Seminary authorised Mar Ivanios to correspond with the Catholic Church for communion. As the negotiations progressed the other prelates who had earlier endorsed the decision of communion with the Catholic Church backed out. Mar Ivanios was unwavering in his decision. He continued the negotiations with Rome. As a result on 20 September 1930, together with Mar Theophilos and three others, he made the profession of faith before Bishop Benziger, Bishop of Kollam and entered into communion with the Catholic Church. This brought the Malankara Church into the Catholic Communion of Churches.

Mar Ivanios' communion with the Catholic Church is the outcome of a pilgrim's progress on the path of spiritual search and research, which crystallised into his vision and mission. This vision is not the fruit of abstract theologising but the concrete result of a practised spirituality and mysticism that is characteristic

of the Eastern and Indian genius. He was neither a professional theologian nor a prolific writer as is seen in the contemporary trends. However, he was a prolific writer in spirituality. He was also an acclaimed orator. He gave expression to thoughts and ideas mainly through these two means. He was a man thoroughly imbued with the Eastern Christian and Indian methods of thinking and living. Hence his vision of the Church has to be extracted from the context of his life.

This article aims at presenting the vision of Mar Ivanios on the Church. The scheme, in fact, includes the ecclesiology of both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. However, the readers would agree that it is impossible, within the limits of this article to give a comprehensive and systematic exposition of the historical and doctrinal content of the ecclesiology of the respective Churches. Hence we content ourselves with a brief exposition of certain dogmatic ecclesial visions in their historical context that serve to highlight the similarities to, differences with and relevance of the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios in relation to those visions.

Besides the introduction, the article has four parts. Part one deals with the general canonico-theological vision of the Church at the time of Mar Ivanios. This includes the Catholic, Orthodox and St. Thomas Christian visions of the Church. This is the ecclesiological environment in which the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios evolved. Parts two and three deal with the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios. They try to analyse the content of this vision scanning the writings and acts of Mar Ivanios; they bring out the elements of his ecclesiology and highlight the salient features. Part four aims at an appraisal of the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios in the light of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches highlighting the relevance of the vision for the present day Malankara Church.

## 1. The Vision of the Church

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have

commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:19-20) “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation... Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs ...”(Acts 2:1-13)

From the day of the Pentecost, “the Church of God in Christ Jesus” (1Thes 2:14) began to spread from Jerusalem to the different parts of the world.<sup>1</sup> The Church that got rooted in a certain place was known by the name of the place itself. Thus, for example, we have the Church of Rome (Roman Church), the Church of Antioch (Antiochene Church), etc. They were the local Churches but together they formed the One Church. The local Churches began to stabilize centred around the metropolitan cities of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. When emperor Constantine became a Christian, Christianity was acknowledged as the official religion of the Roman Empire. There arose a close co-operation between the Church and the state. The state capitals also became the centres of the Church and her life. Thus the Bishops of the metropolitan cities became prominent and they were called Metropolitans. Later they came to be called Patriarchs.<sup>2</sup>

The number of metropolitan sees began to increase in due course. Since the Church and state were closely linked in the Roman Empire, new political developments had their bearing also

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<sup>1</sup> For the biblical perspective and understanding of the Church see VELLANICKAL, *Communion of Churches: A Biblical Perspective*.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief history of the rise of patriarchates see FORTESCUE, *Patriarch and Patriarchate*, 549-553.



on Church administration and structures. When Constantinople became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, the see of Constantinople was considered as a metropolitan see and its Bishop, a Metropolitan.<sup>3</sup> As politically Constantinople was considered the new Rome, prerogatives of the old Rome were claimed by it. Church of Constantinople also claimed similar prerogatives for it. The Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in the year AD 381 further confirmed what was thus established. Canon 2 of the Council gives stringent rules concerning the exercise of jurisdictional powers of the Bishops.

The Church grew up centred around a particular place. The local Church gathered around the Bishop was the basic unit of the Church. There were no juridical forms governing their relationships. "These relations were determined ultimately by the awareness all Christians had of belonging to the one Lord and to the one Catholic Church. Church unity was manifested in a practical way: for example, when the bishop from neighbouring districts convened in a city that had lost its chief pastor for the consecration of a new bishop. Occasions of this kind soon came to be used for the holding of synods, which became a regular feature in the life of the Church."<sup>4</sup>

The first Council of Nicea (AD 325) and the First Council of Constantinople (AD 381) resolved the Arian controversy and affirmed the consubstantiality of the Son of God with the Father. The faith of the Church was expressed through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed. The Council of Ephesus (AD 431) declared that Jesus was truly God and truly man and "that the divinity and humanity were united in one person (the "hypostatic union"), the Person of the Word, the Son of God incarnate. Consequently, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*)."<sup>5</sup> The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) confronted the

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<sup>3</sup> On Church and state relationship and how the Church came to follow the civil system of governance in its hierarchical structure, see MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 15-33; SCHMEMANN, *Church, World, Mission*, 92-101.

<sup>4</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 29 For a detailed study see pages 15-33. See also VALIYAVILAYIL, *The Nature of a Sui Iuris Church*, 72-82.

<sup>5</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 27



Monophysites who “refused to distinguish between the concepts of Person (*hypostasis*) and Nature (*physis*). If Christ were one Person, they claimed, he could not have two natures but only one (*mono-*, “one,” *physis*, “nature”). The Council affirmed that the Son of God must be confessed in two natures “unconfusedly, immutably, inseparably, united... in one Person or ‘hypostasis’”.”<sup>6</sup> After this Council the Copts, the Syro-Jacobites, Armenians, Ethiopians, that is, the non-Greek Churches drifted away from communion with the Greek and the Western Churches due to christological controversies and fell into schism. The Church was now virtually conterminous with the Greek and Latin portions of the Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup>

The relation between the Greek and the Latin Churches endured up to 1054 withstanding so many ups and downs. The Churches weathered the conflicts between Patriarch Photius and Pope Nicholas I in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The conflict between Patriarch Caerularius and Pope Leo IX came to a flash point in the year 1054. The Patriarch refused to receive the delegates under the leadership of Cardinal Humbert sent by the Pope. Enraged by the attitude, the delegates managed to enter Hagia Sophia, deposited the famous sentence of deposition on the high altar and managed to escape. The Patriarch and his clergy were excommunicated for two reasons: for having omitted the *filioque* from the creed and for allowing marriage for the clergy. Caerularius replied by excommunicating the legates. Thus the events of 1054 put a seal on the break between Rome and Constantinople.

The above brief history gives us the different streams of ecclesial and dogmatic developments in the “Church of God in Christ Jesus”. Each of these Churches developed its own ecclesial and faith life in the context in which it lived in accordance with the dogmatic position it held.

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<sup>6</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 27-28

<sup>7</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 28, 55

## 1.1. The Catholic Vision of the Church

It is next to impossible to comprehend in few words the evolution of the Catholic vision of the Church of Christ that was inaugurated in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost to the present day. The Church is a visible society founded in the world as an extension of the Kingdom of God that Jesus Christ came to establish in the world by his redemptive action. Thus the Church has both visible and invisible elements, is both a secular reality and divine mystery. Jesus Christ the eternal pastor entrusted the Church to the Apostles united under Peter who is the visible source of unity of faith and communion.

The Father created the whole universe. The Son, in accordance with the will of the Father, redeemed the world inaugurating the Kingdom of God on earth. The Holy Spirit gathers the people redeemed by Christ into a Church and dwells in and sanctifies it (LG 2-4). “Hence the universal Church is seen to be “a people brought into unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”.” (LG 4) The Church, the People of God, is hierarchically constituted. The hierarchical constitution of the Church as willed by Christ implies the divine structure of the Church as well as the exercise of the power of governance in the Church.

### 1.1.1. The Vision of the Church According to the First Vatican Council

The chief concern of the First Vatican Council in the dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ, *Pastor aeternus*, was to define the primacy of the Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter over the universal Church. Enunciating the perpetuity of the primacy of blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiff it is said:

For this reason, “because of its more powerful principality”, it was always “necessary for every Church, that is, the faithful who are everywhere, to be in agreement” with the Roman Church; thus in that See, from which “the bonds of sacred communion” are imparted to all, the members under one head and coalesce into one compact body. (ND 823)

While elucidating the power and nature of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff it is taught:

In the disposition of God, the Roman Church holds the pre-eminence of ordinary power over all the other Churches; and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate. Regarding this jurisdiction, the shepherds of whatever rite or jurisdiction and the faithful, individually and collectively are bound by a duty of hierarchical subjection (*hierarchicae subordinationis*) and of sincere obedience; and this not only in matters that pertain to faith and morals, but also in matters that pertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world. The result is that when this bond of unity, both of communion and of profession of the same faith, is guarded, then the Church of Christ is one flock under one supreme shepherd. (ND 826)<sup>8</sup>

The Council does not deny thereby the immediate and ordinary power of the Bishops over the flock, which is entrusted to them by the Holy Spirit. They are entrusted with this duty as the successors of the Apostles. The power of the Supreme Pontiff does not in any way stand against their power, but only strengthens it (ND 827).

The Oriental Churches were placed under the papal primacy, which is proclaimed over every rite or dignity, as we have seen above. Thus all Bishops of the Eastern Churches with their respective Patriarchs were all directly and immediately under the supreme power of the Roman Pontiff.<sup>9</sup> The power that they had was a concession of the Roman Pontiff. Not only the primacy of the Roman Pontiff was affirmed, but to the Roman Church itself was attributed a primacy by disposition of the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Parenthesis is ours.

<sup>9</sup> Mansi 52:1104 He says that the power of the Pope is suprapatriarchal. Therefore, one can say, that he admits the jurisdiction of the Patriarchs and it can be named as supraepiscopal. See PRUSAK, *The Canonical Concept of Particular Church*, 25, note 51.

<sup>10</sup> See PRUSAK, *The Canonical Concept of Particular Church*, 20, 23, 25



### 1.1.2. The Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*

The Encyclical *Mystici corporis* by Pope Pius XII, a momentous papal teaching, presented a new image of the Church. The Church is the “mystical body” of Christ. It is distinct from the Christ’s physical body. The soul of this mystical body is the Holy Spirit. The Church is one, undivided, organically compacted body. “Moreover, just as in nature a body does not consist of an indiscriminate heap of members, but must be provided with organs, that is, with members not having the same function yet properly co-ordinated, so the Church for this special reason merits to be called a body, because it results from a suitable disposition and coherent union of parts, and is provided with members different from one another but harmoniously compacted. It is thus that the Apostle describes Church: “As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ; and every one members one of another”.” (n 16). The Church, the body is Christ, is founded by Christ (nn 23, 24). He is the head of the body because of his pre-eminence and because he rules the Church (nn 35, 36). Christ and his body need each other (n 42). There is a likeness between Christ and his members (n 44) In Christ is the plenitude. He is the source of light and holiness.

### 1.1.3. The Church According to the Second Vatican Council

The importance of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council needs no elaboration. It was a path-breaking Council that gave a new vision and mission to the Church. The Ecclesiology of the Church can be synthesized from the documents of the Council, such as *Lumen gentium* (LG), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Christus dominus* (CD), the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Unitatis redintegratio* (UR), the Decree on Ecumenism, *Orientalium ecclesiarum* (OE), the decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Gaudium et spes* (GS), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and *Ad gentes* (GS), the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity.



### 1.1.3.1. The Structure of the Church

LG is the pivotal document of the Second Vatican Council. It is a study of the Church in its totality and founded on the scripture. Chapter one expounds the mystery of the Church through a number of Biblical imageries. Chapter two describes the Church as the People of God. Thereafter the constitutive elements of this People of God – the hierarchy, the laity, the religious, the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints, are dealt with. It is important for us to note that, departing from the traditional Catholic view that the Universal Catholic Church *is* the Church, the Council declares: “This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, *subsists* in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines.” (LG 8)<sup>11</sup>

Our study of these documents, for the sake of brevity, is limited to the structure of the Church and the exercise of authority in the Church. The Council leaving aside the concept of the Church as a monolithic structure wherein authority is exercised from above, has developed an ecclesiology of communion.<sup>12</sup> The various divinely instituted and ecclesial juridical structures and exercise of authority in the Church are presented in the context of collegiality or communion.<sup>13</sup>

Collegiate unity is also apparent in the mutual relations of each bishop to individual dioceses and with the universal Church. The Roman Pontiff, as the successor

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<sup>11</sup> The emphasis is ours.

<sup>12</sup> Theologians are divided in their opinion on this: “Vat. II contains some significant deficiencies and anomalies that have given rise to conflicting positions in interpreting its documents. It contains two different ecclesiologies. One is the Western, juridical, papal, universalistic ecclesiology which starts with the universal Church and considers the other churches as parts of the one church of God. The other is the emerging theology of the universal church as the communion of churches.” (KALLARANGATT, Communion Ecclesiology, 74; see also 75-76)

<sup>13</sup> In fact the documents of the Council uses the word “collegiality” not “communion”. It is the Eastern mind that reads “communion” into “collegiality”. Are they really synonyms?

of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches, which is constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists. And for that reason precisely each bishop represents his own Church, whereas all, together with the Pope, represent the whole Church in a bond of peace, love and unity (LG 23a).

Thus the Church is presented as a communion of local Churches united in the bonds of faith, love and mutual service (LG 13, 23, 26).

However, a closer analysis of the documents of the Council, especially LG and CD, presents the Universal Church mainly as a communion of dioceses. In CD 11 we read: "A diocese is a section of the people of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him into one community in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes one particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active". In order to get a holistic vision of the mystery and the structure of the Church, one has to integrate LG, CD, OE and UR. Though not directly intended, we see that the concept, "the Church is a communion of Churches" is implied in these documents. LG says:

"It has come about through divine providence that, in the course of time, different Churches set up in various places by the apostles and their successors joined together in a multiplicity of organically united groups which, whilst safeguarding the unity of the faith and the unique divine structure of the universal Church, have their own discipline, enjoy their own liturgical usage and inherit a theological and spiritual patrimony. Some of these, notably the ancient patriarchal Churches, as it were, and down to our own days they were linked with these by bonds of a more intimate charity in what pertains to the sacramental life and in mutual respect for

rights and obligations. This multiplicity of local Churches, unified in a common effort, shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the undivided Church” (LG 23d).<sup>14</sup>

Thus LG implicitly acknowledges the existence of Individual Churches whose communion is the Universal Church. The Council again prefaces the OE with almost the same wordings and asserting that it belongs to the divinely revealed undivided heritage of the Universal Church: “... For in those Churches, which are distinguished by their venerable antiquity, there is clearly evident the tradition which has come from the apostles through the Fathers and which is part of the divinely revealed, undivided heritage of the Universal Church” (OE 1). It seems that what was left unfinished in LG is completed in OE:

The holy Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and same government. They combine into different groups, which are held together by their hierarchy, and so form particular churches or rites. Between those churches there is such a wonderful bond of union that this variety in the Universal Church, so far from diminishing its unity, rather serves to emphasize it. (OE 2)

The Council not only acknowledges the individuality of these Churches, but also affirms their equality, right and obligation for preaching the Word of God. It makes provisions for the pastoral care of its faithful everywhere in the world (OE 3,4). It then declares their right and duty to govern themselves:

For that reason this Council solemnly declares that the churches of East like those of the West have the right and duty to govern themselves according to their own special disciplines. For these are guaranteed by ancient tradition, and seem to be better suited to the customs of their faithful and to the good of their souls. (OE 5)

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<sup>14</sup> See also OE 1



The right of the Eastern Catholic Churches to govern themselves is also acknowledged as a right of the Eastern non-Catholic Churches as well and for the same reasons. This principle though had not been always observed, is a condition *sine qua non* for unity:

To remove all shadow of doubt, then, this holy Synod solemnly declares that the Church of the East, while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to own disciplines, since these are better suited to the character of their faithful and better adapted to foster the good of the souls. The perfect observance of this traditional principle – which indeed has not always been observed – is a prerequisite for any restoration of union. (UR 16)

Reading these teachings of the Second Vatican Council together, we can affirm that the Council sees the Universal Church as a communion of Churches.<sup>15</sup>

### 1.1.3.2. Exercise of Authority in the Church

The Theology of collegiality or communion has its direct impact in the exercise of authority in the Church. Authority is exercised collegially or in communion with the members of the college to which one belongs. LG also presents ecclesiastical authority as a service or *diakonia*. Its purpose is to build up the Body of Christ (LG 18, 24, 27). To this end, the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and his infallible teaching office is to be taught undeviatingly in continuity with the teachings of the First Vatican Council (LG 18).

A variety of offices are set up in the Church to shepherd the People of God by Jesus the eternal Pastor. “He willed that their successors, the bishops namely, should be the shepherds in his Church until the end of the world. In order that the episcopate itself, however, might be one and undivided he put Peter at the

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<sup>15</sup> On the Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, see also VALIYAVILAYIL, The Nature of a *Sui Iuris* Church, 89-94; KALLARANGATT, Communion Ecclesiology.



head of the other apostles, and in him he set up a lasting and visible source and foundation of unity both of faith and of communion.” (LG 18) He is the Vicar of Christ and visible head of the Church. “Just as, in accordance with the Lord’s decree, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a unique apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another.” (LG 22)

This collegiate unity is expressed through councils, especially the ecumenical councils. However, “the college of bishops has for all that no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, as its head, whose primatial authority, let it be added, over all, whether pastors or faithful, remain in its integrity. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.” (LG 22)

The Council also teaches that the Pope teaches infallibly in matters of faith and morals: “The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when as supreme pastor or teacher of all the faithful—he proclaims in an absolute decision a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals.” (LG 25)

Bishops are vicars and legates of Christ. They govern the People of God by virtue of their authority and sacred power (LG 27). “This power, which they exercise personally in the name of Christ, is proper, ordinary and immediate, although its exercise is ultimately controlled by the supreme authority of the Church and can be confined within certain limits should the usefulness of the Church and the faithful require that.” (LG 27) Bishops exercise their office in communion with the Pope and all other bishops as members of Episcopal college. He is constituted a member of the college by Episcopal consecration, which is the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, which confers on him the powers of sanctifying, teaching and governing (LG 21, 22). They exercise it in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the

college. The individual bishops participate in the infallibility gifted to the Church, not as singular bishops, but as a body in communion with Peter's successor (LG 25).

## 1.2. The Orthodox Vision of the Church

As everyone knows, there is no entity called an Orthodox Church. Under this nomenclature is included a number of Churches that claim to have their origin in the apostolic days. In the absence of any Pan-Orthodox (Ecumenical) Council, one cannot trace any unified teaching representing the Orthodox Churches. Hence we have to take the views of some Orthodox Theologians as representative Orthodox vision of the Church.

The Orthodox Churches are Churches of the Ecumenical Councils. The teachings of the early councils of the Church are the foundation of their faith and Church structures. It should be immediately added that in accordance with the number of Ecumenical Councils they acknowledge these Churches can be grouped into two: the Churches that accept the first three Ecumenical Councils, called the Pre-Chalcedonian Churches and the Churches that acknowledge the first seven Ecumenical Councils, mainly the Churches of Greek or Byzantine origin. The former are also called Oriental Orthodox Churches (Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian and Indian) while the latter are known as Eastern Orthodox Churches.<sup>16</sup> On the cause of and attitudes to these divisions, Meyendorff writes:

“... we must avoid the romantic fallacy of thinking that there was ever an “undivided Church” which lasted for some nine centuries. As a matter of fact, the Church has experienced a succession of heresies and schisms from the very earliest times. A particularly important and long-lived separation began in the fifth and sixth centuries over christological issues, when whole nations

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<sup>16</sup> For an understanding of the classification on the basis of theological disputes and geographical extensions see KOONAMMAKKAL, *An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition*, 129-130.

– Egypt, Ethiopia, Armenia, and large segments of the Syrian population – abandoned the communion of the orthodox “Great Church,” which they referred to scornfully as the “Melkite” or “imperial” Church... In the ninth and tenth centuries this Greco-Roman world was in turn divided into two great branches, along the linguistic and political frontiers which then demarcated the two zones of the ancient Roman Empire.”<sup>17</sup>

### 1.2.1. The Vision of the Church in the Orthodox World in General

The Orthodox Church believes that it is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, the one true Church of Christ. In its view, the Church of the West has lost its doctrinal and ecclesiological purity and balance of the early Church. The Orthodox Church is a Church of continuity and tradition. She is the guardian of the true faith, which is handed down to us by the apostles and the fathers of the Church.<sup>18</sup> “The Orthodox regard the period of the ecumenical councils as a normative period. It was then, by and large, that the dogmatic and canonical norms of the Orthodox faith were laid down, as we know them today, rather than in later ages as was the case with Western Christianity.”<sup>19</sup>

#### 1.2.1.1. The Structure of the Church.

The organisational structuring of the Church has undergone a gradual evolution from the apostolic days to the present day. The Canons of the first Ecumenical Councils bear witness to this. From a domestic Church, it developed into city Churches under the leadership of the Episcopos. Later, the cities grouped themselves under the leadership of the metropolis and the Bishop

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<sup>17</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 35 See also page 55.

<sup>18</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 35, 173 On the use of the words “Orthodox” and “Catholic”, see page ix of the same book.

<sup>19</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 27 See also SCHMEMANN, *Church, World, Mission*, 89; MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 27-33



of the metropolis came to be called a Metropolitan. From Canon 6 of Nicea to Canon 28 of Chalcedon, we see a gradual evolution of the ecclesial structuring of the early centuries of the Church. The Metropolitans of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem later assumed the title “Patriarch” and Metropolitans and Bishops in their respective jurisdictions were considered as their suffragans. This is the origin of the pentarchy. “The five patriarchs were invested with a collective primacy in the Church and consecrated metropolitans in their respective areas. Within the Pentarchy there was an honorary order of precedence which accorded the first place to the bishop of Rome, who was followed by the bishops of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.”<sup>20</sup>

The early structure of the Church was changed in line with the “progressive organizational integration of the Church’s structures into the administrative system of the empire.”<sup>21</sup> It ended up in the creation of a Christian *oikoumene*. The integration was so much, that one couldn’t reject it without rejecting something essential to the Church. It has become part of the *historicity* of the Church in which the Church fulfils her vocation and mission. Though the Church is everywhere *not of this world*, she “accepts” something of this world to express herself in this world. While the first is the “unchanging”, the second is the “changing”. The first is “canonical”, the essential value that the Church possesses. The second, the jurisdictional dimension that she draws from the “imperial” layer is to express the “essence” of the Church. This juridical dimension is relative and passing.<sup>22</sup> Canon 28 of Chalcedon is the example of the triumph of the jurisdictional aspect in the *oikoumene*.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 58

<sup>21</sup> SCHMEMANN, *Church, World, Mission*, 93

<sup>22</sup> Schmemmann clearly states that “even today, after centuries of an almost complete triumph of “jurisdictional” ecclesiology, we say, for example, that all bishops are “equal in grace,” denying thus that distinctions in rank (e.g. patriarch, archbishop, bishop) have any “ontological” content. It is absolutely important to understand that this ‘jurisdictional’ layer, although perfectly justified and even necessary in its own sphere of application, is a *different* layer, not to be confused with the “essential” one.” (*Church, World, Mission*, 94)

<sup>23</sup> SCHMEMANN, *Church, World, Mission*, 92-97



From the dismemberment of Byzantium, Christian nation, there emerged the third layer, the *national* dimension. From the disintegration of the empire there emerged the idea of a *Christian nation*, with a national vocation, a kind of corporate “identity” before God. There appeared the notion of “autocephaly”, a product of a *national* phenomenon. To a universal empire corresponds an “imperial” Church. “Autocephaly”, that is, ecclesiastical independence<sup>24</sup>, is the by-product of the “Christian nation.” It is the religious projection of a nation, a symbol of *national identity*. However, it shall not be confused with the “essential ecclesiology”.

After the fall of Byzantium in 1453 under the Islamic concept of “religion-nation” (millet), the Ecumenical Patriarch became *de facto* and *de jure* head of all Christians. This led to the liquidation of the former “autocephalies.” This downfall became an opportunity for Russia to float an ideology with messianic overtones, “the Third Rome.” This was perceived as a “Slavic” threat to “Hellenism”. The net result of all this in the modern age of pan-Orthodox history is “that of divisions, provincialism, theological sclerosis, at last but not least: a *nationalism* which by then was almost completely secularised and therefore paganized.”<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2.1.2. The Exercise of Authority

We have seen that the Orthodox Church is a Church of the Councils. It can mean that the faith of the Orthodox Church is founded on the faith of the early councils of the Church of ecumenical value. It can also mean that the Orthodox Church is conciliar or synodal in its structure with regard to the exercise of authority in the Church. Authority was not vested in a single person, but in the gathering of the Bishops of the province with

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<sup>24</sup> For other descriptions of “autocephaly” (from the Greek words *auto* – self and *kephale* – head) see also MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 57. For him such Churches have their own heads who were metropolitans or archbishops who sometimes received the title “patriarch”. Such Churches had the right to choose their own bishops.

<sup>25</sup> SCHMEMANN, *Church, World, Mission*, 101

regard to the province (provincial synods) and the bishops of the entire Church (Ecumenical Councils) with regard to the Universal Church. This way of exercising power in the Church is clearly contained in the canons of the early Ecumenical Councils.<sup>26</sup> According to the Orthodox Church, the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) is the primordial and the mother of all councils in the Church. However, the Orthodox Churches are also of the view that local Churches are autonomous under its own Bishop. The Synods only dealt with matters that pertained to the common interest of the Church of a province or of the *oekumene*. The local Churches do not live in isolation, but they are held together by the identity of faith that is guaranteed by the synods. Thus the Church is above all a communion in which God is present sacramentally. For the Orthodox, the unity of the Church is not an administrative unity, but a unity of faith.<sup>27</sup>

In the synodal structuring of the Church, the primacy attributed to a single person in the exercise of authority in the Church is viewed from a substantially different perspective. He can at the most occupy an honorary position in the Synod. He is the first among the equals, *primus inter pares*, a presiding officer, who presides over in charity, for the good of the Church. He is neither above the Church nor the Synod. "The Community of Jerusalem is governed by the college of the Twelve, but in this college the apostle Peter clearly occupies the first place: he speaks in the name of all and acts as head. It is probable that the famous words of Jesus on the road to Caesarea reported by the Jerusalemite Gospel of Matthew relate to this predominant role of Peter at Jerusalem: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." (Mt 16:18)<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to enter into an elaborate discussion on the matter. Apostolic Canons 1, 34, 37, Nicea I c 4, 5, Constantinople I c 2, Antioch c 16, 19, 23, etc. are some reference that can be given here. For details see VALIYAVILAYIL, *The Nature of a Sui Iuris Church*, 79-82. On synodality, among other works, see SCHMEMANN, *Towards a Theology of the Councils*; DUPREY, *The Synodical Structure*.

<sup>27</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 192-195

<sup>28</sup> MEYENDORFF, *The Orthodox Church*, 5 For an interpretation of the 'Petrine' texts according to Orthodox ecclesiology, see KESICH, *Peter's Primacy in the New Testament*

On a closer analysis, one can understand that the Orthodox does not deny primacy, but they do not accept it in the way it is exercised today in the Catholic Church. According to Affanassieff, it is the result of different ecclesiological systems that can be basically reduced to two: “The systems can all be reduced to two fundamental types: universal ecclesiology and Eucharistic ecclesiology. The universal sort is now predominant, especially in Catholic doctrine. The Orthodox Church has not clearly defined her attitudes, but our “school” teaching follows Catholic doctrine and accepts universal ecclesiology as an axiom”.<sup>29</sup> The universal ecclesiology sees the Church as a single organic whole, the Body of Christ, and in Catholic terms, the Mystical Body of Christ<sup>30</sup>. The Eucharistic ecclesiology based on “You are the Body of Christ” (1Cor 12:17) and the liturgical formula, “This is my Body” and 1Cor 10:16-17: “The Bread which we break, is it not a communion in the Body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread”. “The local church—though “many” and “you” in texts quoted above—is the Body of Christ in its eucharistic aspect.”<sup>31</sup> The Church becomes the Body of Christ through the Eucharist that is the Body of Christ. Christ indwells in every local Church and in every local Church indwells the Church of God in Christ. Christ’s Body is indivisible. “The indivisibility of Christ’s Body implies the fullness of the Church dwelling in each of the “local” churches. This view of the Church is expressed in another of Paul’s formula: “the Church of God which *is* (or dwells) at Corinth,” or anywhere else local Churches are to be found”<sup>32</sup>. As Christ indwells in perfect fullness in local Churches, they are autonomous and independent. “It is independent, because any power, of any kind, exercised over it would be exercised over Christ and His Body. It is autonomous, because fullness of being belongs to the Church of God in Christ, and outside it nothing is, for nothing can have being outside Christ”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> AFANASSIEFF, *The Church Which Presides In Love*, 92

<sup>30</sup> AFANASSIEFF, *The Church Which Presides In Love*, 92

<sup>31</sup> AFANASSIEFF, *The Church Which Presides in Love*, 108

<sup>32</sup> AFANASSIEFF, *The Church Which Presides in Love*, 109

<sup>33</sup> AFANASSIEFF, *The Church Which Presides In Love*, 109



### 1.2.2. The St. Thomas Christian Vision of the Church

At the time of the division in 1653 there were two options before the St. Thomas Christians of India, either to accept the Latin rule and the Latin rite or to safeguard the autonomy of their Church and safeguard its Indian and Oriental patrimony. The St. Thomas Christians, by now also called Syrians, opted for the second alternative. However, it should be noted that from the moment of separation there were attempts at reconciliation and communion.<sup>34</sup>

The St. Thomas Christians viewed their Church as a Church of apostolic origin that came about through the preaching of the Good News by St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. It is part of the universal Church willed and established by Jesus Christ founded on the Apostles. The Church spread to the various parts of the world after the Pentecost through the preaching of the apostles. The communities that thus sprang up were independent of one another but in communion with one another. These communities or local Churches were rooted in the socio-cultural milieu in which they began to grow up. Thus the Church that got rooted in India grew up in the fertile religious culture of India and was thoroughly indigenous. This Church was in communion with universal Church through communion with other Churches, especially through the Church of Persia or Seleucia-Ctesiphon.<sup>35</sup> On this, after quoting great scholars like Cardinal Tisserant and Fr. Placid, L. Moolaveetil concludes: "The members of the early

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<sup>34</sup> For the details of this history see MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 25-72, 99-121.

<sup>35</sup> In fact, it is not our aim and it is not within the scope this article to enter into a discussion concerning the origin, growth and ecclesial relationship of the St. Thomas Christians of India. With which ecclesial community the early St. Thomas Christians had relation, whether with the Syro-Chaldean Church of Persia or with the Jacobite Church of Antioch is often disputed. Those with an axe to grind of their own will try to prove the stand taken by him... Cyril Malancharuvil in his book, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, proves conclusively that before the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Malankara Church had no hierarchical communion whatsoever with the Patriarch of Antioch whether Catholic, Greek or Jacobite (see pages 3-8). See also VARGHESE, *Malankara Anthyocheian Bandham*, especially pages 149-177.



Christian community, known as Thomas or Syrian Christians, eventually increased in number due to conversions and immigrations. From early times onwards they were in close contact with the See of Edessa, which was then the theological centre of the Chaldean Church. According to Cardinal Tisserant, these people were definitely connected with the See of Seleucia-Ctesiphon about AD 450. This was the time when the Mesopotamian-Persian church was receiving their Bishops from Mesopotamia where the same rite of liturgy was practised.”<sup>36</sup> However, they never interfered with the internal administration of the Church.<sup>37</sup> Thus for the St. Thomas Christians of India ecclesial communion and autonomy went hand in hand and the one was not opposed to the other.<sup>38</sup>

### 1.2.2.1. The Structure of the Church

As seen above the Church in India developed as a local Church rooted in the culture of the land. It was autonomous in its internal government. Whatever relations the Church had fostered with the Chaldean Church or later with the Antiochene Church was purely in matters spiritual, especially in the matter of apostolic faith communion. The hierarchical communion that the St. Thomas Church fostered with the Eastern Churches served the purpose of apostolic succession and communion. It never wanted this communion at the expense of the autonomy of the Church in matters spiritual and temporal.<sup>39</sup> The East Syrian Church in itself developed as an independent Church in the Persian Empire in AD 424 even before the Council of Ephesus (AD 431) and Chalcedon (AD 451), at a time when the Church never thought of a universal

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<sup>36</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 11-12

<sup>37</sup> VARGHESE, *Malankara Anthyochian Bandham*, 150

<sup>38</sup> Any Church historian would agree that similar ecclesial hierarchical developments were the order of the day in the first centuries. The development and stabilization of the first five patriarchates of the Roman Empire was in a similar manner and the Ecumenical Councils later ratified it. The Churches that grew up outside the Roman Empire that is the Churches of Persia and India also naturally grew up in a similar way. (See VALIYAVILAYIL, *The Nature of a Sui Iuris Church*, 74-82)

<sup>39</sup> See VARGHESE, *Malankara Anthyochian Bandham*.

jurisdiction.<sup>40</sup> In the East one cannot find an ecclesiology independent of liturgy. In the liturgy, the concept of communion is elaborated as communion 'within' the Church as an adherence to true faith and communion 'without' is a bond that exists with those Churches that share the same faith. The Church, body of Christ is brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. This Church is the Bride of Christ.<sup>41</sup>

The advent of the Portuguese in India marked a turning point in the History of the St. Thomas Christian Church of Malabar. The Portuguese slowly began to impose their ecclesial governance and liturgy over the St. Thomas Christian Church and this process was completed and ratified by the Synod of Diamper in 1599. This completely annihilated the autonomy of the St. Thomas Christians. However, the fragile relationship endured till 1653. After this the indigenous Church tried to establish hierarchical communion with the Syrian Jacobite Church of Antioch. It can be assumed with a great amount of certainty that the St. Thomas Syrian Church of Malabar did not accept the Ecclesiology of the Roman Church in matters of ecclesial structuring and the exercise of authority in the Church. The ecclesiology of the Roman Church of that time saw the Church as a unitary structure with dioceses as units of the Universal Church. The exercise of authority was monarchical.

For the Latin Church the concept of the universality of the Church and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as successor of Peter is more a matter of the external organisation of the Church, a matter of the exercise of the power of jurisdiction. "On the other hand the West Syriac Church was aware of the universality of the Church of Christ... Catholicity and orthodoxy were identified in theoretical terms. The liturgical texts always taught that the Church is spread from one end of the earth to the other end... The concern for the universality of the Church is reflected in the election, consecration and the very title of the Patriarch of Antioch."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> KOONAMMAKKAL, *An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition*, 132

<sup>41</sup> KOONAMMAKKAL, *An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition*, 135-141

<sup>42</sup> KOONAMMAKKAL, *An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition*, 137



By the time the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch came into contact with Malankara, it seems that he had been influenced by a universalistic ecclesiology. He tried to impose his power over the Church of the St. Thomas Syrian Christians of Malankara. But he never succeeded in imposing his jurisdiction over the Malankara Church. However, the Malankara Church for last three centuries has been deeply impressed by the ecclesiology of the West Syrian Church. The ecclesiology of the West Syrian Church, which is apostolic and patristic in origin, is best expressed in her liturgy. According to the West Syrian liturgy, the Church is the saving presence of God in the world. The salvation is brought about through the Son and continued in the Church by the Holy Spirit. The Eucharistic assembly today actualises it through the celebration of the Eucharist. "The Church, in its origin, ministry and destiny is located in the divine economy of salvation, hidden from the ages in the will of God and revealed in His only begotten Son, in the fullness of time (Col. 1:26. Eph. 3:8-9) as Christ himself is presented in the same mystery of God's self-communication."<sup>43</sup> The rich symbolism of the liturgy presents the Church through various models such as the People of God, the Bride of Christ, House of God, Heavenly Jerusalem, New Jerusalem, Beautiful Fortress, the Ship of the Gospel, Strong City, Well-built Tower, etc.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to this liturgical ecclesiology, patristic teachings and the canons of the first three Ecumenical Councils and the Canons of the Twelve Apostles and other Apostolic Fathers are the source of ecclesiology and ecclesial structuring. A compendium of these canons as a collection known as the *Hūdaya Kānon* (Nomocanon) of Bar Hebraeus is the basic canonical foundation of the Antiochene Church. In chapter seven, section one of this *Hūdaya Kānon*, the jurisdictional structure of the Church and

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<sup>43</sup> MAR BASELIOS, *Theological Perspectives in the Malankara Catholic Church*, 6

<sup>44</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to bring out the ecclesiology of the West Syrian Church as seen in her liturgy. The Eucharistic celebrations, the canonical prayers, the Proemion-Sederos on different occasions, especially for the feast of *Kūdōsh ītho* and *Hūdōsh ītho*, the liturgy of the blessing of the Church, etc. It is needless to say that the ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios is a lived experience of this liturgical ecclesiology. See also PANICKER, *Ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios*, 27-30.



thereby the exercise of the jurisdictional powers is clearly dealt with. Accordingly four patriarchs shall rule the four corners of the world. The head Patriarch among them is the one of Rome; with him the Patriarch of Alexandria and thereafter the Patriarch of Constantinople and thereafter the Patriarch of Antioch. The Patriarch of Jerusalem holds the fifth position. The great Metropolitan of the East shall exercise patriarchal powers and be called Catholicos and in Synods he occupies his position together with the Patriarch of Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup> Apart from its liturgy, the West Syrian Church has not developed any particular ecclesiology of its own. A closer analysis of its ecclesiology shows that the West Syrian ecclesiology has many similarities with Catholic ecclesiology.<sup>46</sup>

#### 1.2.2.2. The Exercise of Authority in the Church

On the domain of the exercise of authority in the Church, we limit ourselves to the recent developments in the Orthodox Church. A historical overview shows there is an unbroken continuity of the demand of the Malankara Church to be recognised as an autonomous Church with a self-governing hierarchy and the retention of its identity. Ever since the Malankara Church lost communion and valid episcopacy, it tried to regain apostolic succession of their prelates through valid consecration. They always cherished communion with the ancient apostolic sees such as Antioch and Rome. This was expressed through their willingness to accept the spiritual supremacy of the Patriarchs of these sees. However, with the refusal of the Metropolitan and the Catholicos of the Malankara Church to commune with the Catholic Church in 1930, they were left with no option other than to persevere in communion with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. But, this relationship never ended up in a tranquil peaceful communion neither with the Patriarch of Antioch nor with the opposing groups in the Malankara Church.

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<sup>45</sup> For a Malayalam rendering of the *Hudāya Kānon*, see KONATTU, *Hudāya Kānon*. Our reference can be seen in pages 87-89.

<sup>46</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 66-67; PANICKER, *Ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios*, 30

In 1934, in order to assert the autonomy of the Malankara Church, the Synod that met at Kottayam drafted a constitution for the Church and brought it to force on 26 December 1934. Henceforth the Malankara Church was to be known as the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The following are the declarations.

1. The Malankara Church is an autocephalous division of the Orthodox Syrian Church. The Primate of the Orthodox Syrian Church is the Patriarch of Antioch.
2. The Malankara Church was founded by St. Thomas the Apostle and is included in the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East and the Primate of the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East is the Catholicos.
3. The ancient and the real name of the Malankara Church is the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church although it is also wrongly called 'The Jacobite Church' for the same reasons for which the Orthodox Syrian Church has been also called so.
4. All men and women, who have received the Holy Baptism and believe in the divinity of the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, the Holy Church and the application of the Nicene Creed there-in-all, the divine inspiration of Holy Tradition, the intercession of the Mother of God and the saints, the commemoration of the departed one, the administration of the seven sacraments, and the canonical observances like fasting etc. and have accepted the obligation to observe them, will be members of this Church.
5. The approved Canon of this Church is the Hūdaya Kānon written by Bar Hebraeus (the same canon book as the one printed in Paris in the year 1898).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "The Constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church" given as Appendix II in PAULOS MAR GREGORIOS, *The Orthodox Church in India*, 78

Thereafter articles 99-101 deals with the powers of the Catholicos and the Patriarch:

99. The throne of the Catholicos was re-established in the Orthodox Syrian Church in A.D. 1912 and this institution has been functioning ever since in the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East.
100. The powers of the Catholicos include the consecration of Prelates, presiding over the Episcopal Synod, declaring its decisions and implementing them, conducting administration as representative of the Synod, and consecrating the Holy Mooron.
101. The Malankara Church shall recognize the Patriarch, canonically consecrated with the co-operation of the Catholicos.<sup>48</sup>

From what is quoted above, it can be seen that, the Malankara Church is declared as an autocephalous Church. The Church is to govern itself under the authority of the Catholicos with the Synod. The Patriarch comes into the picture only to the extent that the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church is recognised as an autocephalous division of the Orthodox Syrian Church. The consecration of the Holy Myron, a sign of ecclesiastical communion with the hierarchical head of the Church is now reserved to the Catholicos. If the Patriarch is not consecrated with the co-operation of the Catholicos, he will not be recognised by the Malankara Church. In fact, the 'constitution' does not completely rupture the bond of communion with the Patriarch, but the independence of the Malankara Church is asserted and enshrined in it. The canonical relationship is ambiguous and ambivalent.

The other party, which calls itself Syrian Orthodox Church, perseveres in its communion with the see of Antioch. "The Supreme visible head of the Syrian Orthodox Church is the

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<sup>48</sup> PAULOS MAR GREGORIOS, *The Orthodox Church in India*, 88-89



Patriarch of Antioch. He is considered as the successor of St. Peter and as such he is seated on the throne of St. Peter in Antioch.”<sup>49</sup> As against the Orthodox Syrian Church, it also asserts that it “does not accept the concept of autocephaly and national churches. The one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church must be able to overcome the political boundaries of nations.”<sup>50</sup>

## 2. Mar Ivanios’ Experience and Vision of the Malankara Church

We have been so far trying to comprehend the historico-theological milieu in which Mar Ivanios lived and shaped his ecclesial vision. This is the *Sitz-im-Leben* to understand his vision and praxis. As a person born and brought up in the Malankara Church, Mar Ivanios had imbibed the St. Thomas Syrian Christian tradition and made it part of his life. He was committed to it. A person committed to a Church makes the vision of the Church his own vision. He serves the Church to bring this vision to action. When such a person sees “the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned”, he rises and motivates others: “Come let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace” (Neh 2.17). Mar Ivanios went out inspecting the wall of Jerusalem, the Malankara Church and saw it in trouble and was determined to rebuild its walls.

An analysis of the ecclesial experience of Mar Ivanios of the Malankara Church (St. Thomas Syrian Christian Church), shows that his vision had two phases: one, his vision of the Malankara Orthodox Church, which tended to communion with the Catholic Church. This phase is the phase when he surveys ‘the dilapidated walls of Jerusalem.’ The second phase is his vision ‘to arise and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.’ This is a vision of communion of the Malankara Church with the Catholic Church.

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<sup>49</sup> KOONAMMAKKAL, *An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition*, 146

<sup>50</sup> KOONAMMAKKAL, *An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition*, 148

## 2.1. Mar Ivanios' Vision of the Malankara Orthodox Church

In this section we try to bring out the status and condition of the Malankara Orthodox Church according to the ecclesial experience of Mar Ivanios. We focus mainly the insatiable quest in Mar Ivanios to see the Malankara Orthodox Church as a spiritually renewed united apostolic autonomous Church in the communion of Churches.

### 2.1.1. Mar Ivanios' Early Vision of the Malankara Orthodox Church.

Deacon P.T. Geevarghese (later Mar Ivanios) was sent to Madras Christian College for his postgraduate studies in 1907 and obtained the Master's degree. It can be said that his research into the history and life of the Orthodox Church began with the thesis he wrote for his M.A. degree: *Were the Syrian Christians Nestorians?*<sup>51</sup> Through this dissertation he was trying to refute and set at rest a popular accusation by the Westerners that the Syrian Christians of Malabar were Nestorians in faith. In the process he happened to be supportive of another equally unfounded claim of the Orthodox in India, namely, that the Syrian Christians were Jacobites from the beginning. He summed up the premise thus:

The following pages will, it is hoped, clearly prove that the Church of Malabar was Jacobite and not Nestorian until the fifteenth century. Looked at from this standpoint, the history of this Church may be divided into four following periods: -

From the earliest times until A.D. 1490 the church was Jacobite.

From A.D. 1490 – 1599 the church was Nestorian.

From A.D. 1599 – 1653 the church was Roman Catholic.

From A.D. 1653 to the present time the Church was Jacobite.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For an edited version of this in English, see MAR IVANIOS, *Were the Syrian Christians Nestorians?* For a Malayalam version, see ID, *Suriyani Kristyanikal Nestoriar Āyirinno?*

<sup>52</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Were the Syrian Christians Nestorians?* 115

### 2.1.2. The Ancient Apostolic Church of Christ

He firmly believed that the Indian Church founded by St. Thomas the Apostle is apostolic, catholic and teaches the true faith.<sup>53</sup> While speaking of his communion endeavours, he deals with the history of the Jacobite Church and the St. Thomas Church. The Jacobite Church of Antioch came about through a minority of believers who broke off from the universal Church after the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The root cause of the division is the self-interest and pride of those whose theological positions were not accepted by the majority. In course of time this group divided itself into splinter groups. One such group is the Jacobite Church.<sup>54</sup> According to Mar Ivanios, Christianity in Kerala has a similar history. This ancient Church which came about through the evangelising work of St. Thomas the Apostle. This Church remained one, undivided till the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was during this time, as a result of false propaganda and gossip, a few people split away from the Church of Kerala. It was not split on the basis of any article of faith or belief. The separated group came to be called *Puthenkūttukar* and the others *Pazhayakūttukar*. While the Pope, the head of the Universal Church continued to be recognized the head of the *Pazhayakūttukar*, the *Puthenkūttukar* were in trouble and were on the look out for a hierarchical head. It is in this historical situation that the *Puthenkūttukar* came into contact with the Jacobite Patriarch. History proves that this relationship resulted in endless divisions and litigations in this Church,<sup>55</sup> which continues unabated even today.

### 2.1.3. The Malankara Church is an Autonomous Church

As an apostolic Church that was established through the apostolic and evangelising work of St. Thomas the Apostle of Jesus Christ, it flourished in India, especially in Kerala, as a distinct community of believers, but in communion with the Churches they came into contact with. Thus this local Church was

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<sup>53</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 1

<sup>54</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 60-61

<sup>55</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 61-62



an autonomous Church. All endeavours of Mar Ivanios were focused on building up this Church true to its apostolic origin and in accordance with the rights and duties that emanate from its status as an apostolic Church. His endeavours to establish the Catholicate in Malankara was to raise this Church to an autonomous Church with power of self-governance but without losing communion with the Patriarch of Antioch.

To achieve this end, he firmly stood behind Mar Dionysius VI to establish the Catholicate here in Malankara in the year 1912. He succeeded in it. However further developments in Malankara and conflicts with the Patriarch of Antioch proved that all these endeavours were in vain. He now became sure that the Malankara Church would never prosper under the yoke of the Antiochene Church. Any truce with the Patriarch would only be a temporary solution.<sup>56</sup> He cherished the goal of complete autonomy for the Malankara Church.

#### **2.1.4. The Malankara Church is and Needs to be an Indigenised Church**

Mar Ivanios had the vision of an Indian Church. India is a land, rich in the plurality of religions and diversity of cultures and multiplicity of languages. The seeds of the Gospel fell in this rich soil of India. It grew up in this land. The Indians who received the faith practised their faith in the Indian culture and their counterparts in the Greco-Roman World. With the influx of the Syrians, the Syrian culture began to influence the local culture. Thus the St. Thomas Christian also came to be called Syrians, especially in matters of liturgy.

Mar Ivanios was fully aware of this and had anticipated the impediments it imposed on the Church in the task of evangelisation. While he was at Serampore in Calcutta, he visited the Santhiniketan of Rabindranath Tagore, and the Sabarmati Ashram of Mahatma Gandhi among others and tried to learn from

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<sup>56</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 342

them the genius of Indian Philosophy and *sanyāsa*<sup>57</sup>. When he founded the religious congregations, he named the religious houses of men as ‘Ashrams’ and those of the women as ‘Madhoms’ according to the Indian traditions. He imitated the religious life-style of the Indian *sanyāsis* in his life and gave the same as the life-style of the monks of the Ashrams he founded. Even in the religious dress or habit, he chose the ‘*kāvi*’ clothes both for its simplicity, symbolic value and indigenous origin and appeal.<sup>58</sup> On his consecration as Bishop he invited the whole Malankara Church to a process of inculturation and indigenisation of the Malankara faith life and liturgy.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.1.5. The Malankara Church Needs a Healing

Mar Ivanios cherished the life of the great Church in which he was born. He tried to fathom the depths of its rich spiritual patrimony. He wanted to commit himself totally to Christ through this Church. However, the actual vision of the Malankara Church of his times was alarming. He writes:

“When I reviewed the conditions of the Malankara Church since the year 1872, I suffered unbearable pain. Like one wave after another in the ocean, there were many unfortunate, unpleasant, and unnecessary situations. I saw quarrels, lawsuits, competition, and mob fighting appearing on the scene. I understood that even, the true canons of the Holy Church being overlooked. I pondered over these things, I wondered if it was possible to fulfil the ultimate intentions of God in founding Christianity in Kerala already in the first century or to uphold the essential ideals and interests of the whole community in Malankara, or to secure its continuous prosperity. I knew the present stage of the

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<sup>57</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 144

<sup>58</sup> To his practical view on inculturation, read the letter addressed Vattasseril Mar Dionysius asking him permission to use *kavi* clothes as religious dress for the monks of Bethany Ashram that he intends to found. See the letter in INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 150-151

<sup>59</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 180-181 See the quote below to footnote 60.

Malankara Syrian Community was such that, if one or two self-interested men so wished, they could twist it into any distorted form without difficulty. And it is difficult to see the foreseeable future to restore a pleasant calmness, which would end the quarrels and would quench the thirst for lawsuits. If the members of the community quarrel, the Church would suffer; the suffering of the Church, in turn, affects the community. Are these not real impediments to the acquisition of true devotion and Christian holiness.”<sup>60</sup>

### 2.1.5.1. In Inner Communion

Mar Ivanios was convinced of the necessity of a healing touch to the Malankara Church lost in disunity and spiritual decadence. In attempting unity within the Church he counselled the Bethany Fathers: “Even if I were to be cut into a thousand pieces, in order to heal a small wound in the body of Christ, I feel it should be done.”<sup>61</sup>

He was so convinced of the need of Christian unity, that he made it the main theme of his speech after his consecration. It was also his earnest appeal to the new Catholicos on felicitating him on the assumption of the office. He urged the Catholicos to strive for the unity of all the Syrian Christians of Kerala. As they were one Church in the past, through a true communion, they should realize the word of God, that they all shall be ‘one Church and one sheepfold’. He pointed out that there was a wind of unity blowing through the Christian communities today for communion. The same spirit of unity had to embrace the Christian communities in Kerala. Thus they had to bring to fulfilment the prayer of Jesus: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they all be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (Jn 17:21)<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Quoted from MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 21-22

<sup>61</sup> Mar Ivanios’ Letter to Bethany Fathers at Vennikulam as quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 91 See also INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 349

<sup>62</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 258-261



### 2.1.5.2. Communion with Other Christian Churches

According to Mar Ivanios, the tremendous divisions among the Christian Churches is due to the pride and self-interest of individuals. He writes: "If a Christian is one who is faithful to the teachings of Christ, he has to overcome all difficulties in following Jesus Christ. Christianity is now subjected each ones taste, opinion and even self-interest. If Christians were serious about the faith in Jesus Christ, the divisions as we see today would not have occurred."<sup>63</sup>

### 2.1.5.3. Communion with the Universal Church

We can see that Mar Ivanios' view of the mystery and the reality of the Church evolves slowly. He firmly asserts his conviction that the Universal Church is the body of the Christ.<sup>64</sup> He considers the Church as the continuation of the presence of the risen Christ. We relate to the risen Christ today through the Church.<sup>65</sup> His intense prayer and meditation, the numerous references to the Church in the liturgy of the Church, the references to the primacy of Peter in the Church in the liturgical and juridical sources of the Malankara Church made him convinced that the Church to which he belonged cannot claim to be the true Church. These attributes are best applied to the Catholic Church. Hence he wrote:

The reasons for the separation of the Jacobite Church from the Church of Christ do not have any relation with any heresy; the primacy of Peter is distinctly and very clearly stated in our documents, thus for example: 'The net of St. Peter, the catcher of fish, draws souls from death to life. He is the Rock on which the Church is

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<sup>63</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 63 Translation is ours. See also his speech at his consecration as Bishop of Bethany where he asserts the oneness of the St. Thomas Christian community and the need for unity among them (INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios -- I*, 258-261).

<sup>64</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 64

<sup>65</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios -- I*, 61

built. He carries the key of the kingdom of heaven. He is the Prince of the Apostles and the Teacher of the bishops in matters of faith.<sup>66</sup>

Thus communion with the Universal Catholic Church was for him a means to realise communion with the Church of Christ.

### 2.1.6. The Church Needs a Vision of her Mission

A close examination of the history and life of the Malankara Church convinced Mar Ivanios of the very idle and dormant state of the Church. It had not risen up to fulfil its duties and obligations entrusted to it. The great lamp of the Gospel that was lighted in this land in AD 52 by St. Thomas the Apostle at the command of the Lord had not shed its light all around. While many foreigners came to India for evangelisation ignoring all difficulties during the course of centuries, we here have been silent spectators. We refuse to arise and build our Church up even when people remind us of our inactivity and indifference. This is an unpardonable mistake on the part of the St. Thomas Syrian Christians and generations will hold us responsible.<sup>67</sup>

Mar Ivanios firmly believed that the primary task of the Christian Church is the preaching of the Word of God or evangelisation. Her paramount duty is to manifest Christ to the world. The institutions of the Church are not indispensable. But the Church cannot do away with the preaching the Word of God. It is indispensable for the glory of God.<sup>68</sup>

Mar Ivanios was also convinced that the structures that were created should serve the purpose of the missionary and evangelisation enterprises of the Church. After his consecration as Bishop of Bethany he spoke: "... There is another goal that we have to achieve by the establishment of the throne of the Catholicos in India... We are proud of the fact that Christianity

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<sup>66</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios – I*, 320 Our translation is from PANICKER, *Ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios*, 30.

<sup>67</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 55

<sup>68</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 56

was founded in India nineteen centuries ago. However, in many aspects of our life, Christianity remains foreign in this land. So long as Christianity is not indigenised it will be difficult to present Christ to the Hindu and Muslim communities in India. Christianity can be inculturated (indigenised) in India without least affecting its ancient apostolic and catholic traditions. The establishment of the Catholicate has to inspire the process of evangelisation of India.”<sup>69</sup>

### 2.1.7. The Church Needs a Spiritual Renewal

More than anything, Mar Ivanios was moved by the spiritual decadence of the Church. This was the result of the chaos in the Church due to endless litigations and strife within the Church. He was convinced that only a spiritual renewal could bring about a renaissance and revival of the Church. The answer to this inner quest found its expression in the founding of the monastic life in the Church. In the nineteen centuries of its existence, the Malankara Church was never exposed to monastic life, which is the source of the spiritual vigour of a Church. On this he writes: “From childhood I had a liking for *sanyāsa*. The source of spiritual development, both of individuals and community, is true devotion to God. Some inner force persuaded me to forming a religious (*sanyāsa*) community to realize this end, when I was professor in Serampore College. It was the experience I had from the Church that inspired me to this. I could smell the dirt that had accumulated underneath the Malankara Church of which we were proud of as having been founded by Apostle Thomas teaching catholic faith. I consider it an inspiration of God.”<sup>70</sup>

## 2.2. Mar Ivanios’ Vision of the Malankara Church in Communion with the Catholic Church

Needless to say that Mar Ivanios wanted to actualise his vision and hope of the Malankara Church on communion with the Catholic Church. He was convinced that lasting peace, harmony,

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<sup>69</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 180-181

<sup>70</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 5



communion, and spiritual growth of individuals as well as Churches could be achieved only through communion with the Catholic Church. According to him, communion has to be first achieved at the level of all St. Thomas Syrian Christians. Thereafter communion with the Catholic Church is to be achieved through communion with the *pazhayakūttukar*.<sup>71</sup> In our brief survey of the endeavours of the Malankara Church Prelates from 1653 to the time of Mar Ivanios, it can be seen that, during the course of three centuries, there was no change in the essence of their requests to Rome. They put forward consistently two conditions – 1. That the prelates who come to communion with the Catholic Church be allowed to remain in their Episcopal dignity and exercise their jurisdiction over the faithful of their Church. 2. That the Malankara Church retains its liturgy and discipline.

### **2.2.1. Mar Ivanios Presents the Cause of Communion with the Catholic Church**

We shall now present the text of the memorandum that Mar Ivanios sent to Rome for our study and interpretation.

#### **WHAT IS WANTED**

The entry of the Jacobite Church into the unity of the Catholic Church,

- 1) preserving their ancient rites and rituals, and
- 2) conserving the jurisdiction of the uniting Bishops over their flock.

#### **STATEMENT**

Since the year 1665 some of the Syrians in South India have been members of the Jacobite Church, and recognised the spiritual supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, living at Mardin in Turkey. And

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<sup>71</sup> It is to be noted that it was always an inner calling in him to foster the communion of Churches. He spoke of this on all occasions. He solemnly and unfearingly proclaimed this idea on his consecration as Bishop. See the speech in INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 258-261.

the Jacobite Church in India enjoyed autonomy regarding the internal affairs of the Church.

Since 1910, the Jacobite Church in South India has been split into two sections. One section owes allegiance to Elias III, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch living in Mardin. The other section owes allegiance to the Catholicos of the East living at Vakathanam, near Kottayam, Travancore. The Catholicate was established in India by the Jacobite Patriarch Abdul Messiah II who visited Travancore in 1912. The Catholicate is the revival of the early Catholicate of the East which had its See at Tigris in Mesopotamia. The Catholicate is independent of the Patriarch of Antioch. And within the Catholicate, Patriarchal powers are exercised by the Holy Synod which is composed of the Catholicos and his con-provincial Bishops.

The Holy Synod of the Catholicate prays that they be admitted into the unity of the Catholic Church, themselves,

1. preserving the ancient rites and rituals
2. retaining for the Holy Synod and for the individual Bishops their jurisdiction over all the Jacobite Syrians that come into reunion and
3. accepting the supremacy of the Holy See, the Pope being the successor of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles of Our Lord.

The Holy Synod does not want to be placed under the Jurisdiction of the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Beyrout. For the Holy Synod itself exercises Patriarchal jurisdiction within the Archdiocese of the Catholicate in South India...<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 122-123 At the meeting of the Synod of the Malankara Church held at Parumala on 1 November 1926. Catholicos Mar Baselius, Titular Metropolitan Mar Gregorios of Kundara and Mar Ivanios, Bishop of Bethany participated. Mar Ivanios was authorized by the Synod to explore the possibility of communion with Rome. Accordingly Mar

### 2.2.2. What Did Mar Ivanios Want?

From the text of the memorandum it is clear that Mar Ivanios had not for a moment wavered from the path of his predecessors in presenting the cause of the Malankara Church for communion with the Church of Rome.<sup>73</sup> The memorandum clearly requested three things: 1. The right to preserve the rites and rituals of the Malankara Church, that is, to be recognised as an individual Church on the right of its own identity; 2. The right of Holy Synod and the individual Bishops to exercise their jurisdiction over all Jacobite Syrians that come into communion, that is, the autonomy of the Church for self-governance; 3. The right to be in communion with the Universal Church accepting the supremacy of the Holy See, the Pope being the successor of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles of Our Lord.

### 2.2.3. The Recognition of the Apostolic Patrimony of the Church

For three centuries the Malankara Church was struggling to assert and live its individuality and (juridical) personality as a Church in the communion of the Universal Church. The Church

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Ivanios sent an unofficial memorandum to Rome in 1926 through Fr. Rebeira from Mavelikara. An unofficial reply was sent from Rome in 1928. Together with the reply there was also a questionnaire of six questions, which Mar Ivanios answered and sent to Rome. In the meantime Mar Ivanios was also in correspondence with the Apostolic Delegate in India giving him details of the hopes and aspirations of the communion efforts. The Holy See answered the memorandum on 5 August 1929. On 17 September 1929 Mar Ivanios again wrote to Rome through the Apostolic Delegate, venturing to submit a suggestion to reconsider the position of the Catholicos, on which Rome had expressed reservations in its reply. Meanwhile the Catholicos, the Malankara Metropolitan and other Bishops except Mar Theophilos of Bethany had backtracked from the decision of the Synod of Parumala. The Holy See communicated its final decision that was taken in plenary session of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches held on 4 July 1930. Mar Ivanios made the Profession of Faith and entered the Communion of the Catholic Churches on 20 September 1930. (For a detailed exposition of the history and content of the correspondence see MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 122-131; INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 292-315)

<sup>73</sup> MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 123



had an identity of its own from its apostolic origin, indigenous implantation and growth. Implanted in the socio-religious culture of India, the Malankara Church had grown up as a Church.

We have already seen in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the circumstances under which a Church develops and grows up as an individual Church. One has to read LG 23 together with OE and UR 11-18 to fully comprehend this idea.<sup>74</sup> What are the elements that make a community of Christian Faithful an individual Church? A summary of the teachings of the Council shows that apostolic origin inspired a community to organise itself as a local Church. The Apostles preached the Gospel that they received from the Lord. The risen Lord commanded them to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The Christ experience of each Apostle in its basic content is the same. However, each one experienced Christ in his own unique way. Hence each Apostle when transmitting faith or Christ experience through his preaching, it contains a unique character which the community also assimilates and makes it part of their ecclesial life. Thus apostolic faith can mean that the content of faith is in agreement with the faith of the Apostles or that the faith content of a particular Church has the character traits or uniqueness of the Christ experience of a particular Apostle. This apostolic faith will be passed on from generation to generation. It will be dynamic and evolving. Thus continuity is assured. The faith of the Malankara Church has both these characteristics of apostolicity, that is, it is the apostolic faith of the Apostles and has the characteristic of the unique Christ experience of St. Thomas the Apostle.<sup>75</sup>

At the time of the communion of Mar Ivanios and later when the Syro-Malankara Catholic Hierarchy was established through the Apostolic Constitution *Christo pastorum principi* on 11 June 1932, there was no common Code of Canon Law governing the

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<sup>74</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this topic. The teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches supply ample material from which we can develop this theme.

<sup>75</sup> See also KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 34-35; MAR BASELIOS, *Evangelisation and Pastoral Care*, 28.

life of Oriental Churches. The laws that were to be applied to Oriental Churches that were promulgated as *Motu Proprios* came after 1946. There existed the Code of Canon Law of 1917 of the Latin Church. It is to be assumed that Rome was applying the Canon Law of the Latin Church in the establishment of the hierarchies of the Oriental Churches although these Churches were free to follow their own liturgical, spiritual, disciplinary and cultural patrimonies. According to the mentality of the time, the Oriental Churches that commune with the Church of Rome were recognised as 'Rites.'<sup>76</sup> In any case the Malankara Catholic Church was acknowledged as an autonomous Church in the Catholic Church with its own liturgical, spiritual, disciplinary and cultural patrimony it had treasured for the last nineteen centuries.<sup>77</sup>

To make it clearer, it can be said that when the Malankara Church was recognised as a Church in the Catholic communion, the following were the content of the patrimony of the church: 1. Apostolic origin of the Church from St. Thomas the Apostle of Jesus. The apostolic deposit of faith (patrimony) and its expressions in liturgy and life (Law of Thomas) handed down to generations from AD 52 till 1930. 2. The patrimony of the Church that evolved during apostolic days. 3. The patrimony of the Church that evolved from apostolic days till the coming of the Syrians, that is, whatever had accrued to the patrimony till 1653. 4. The patrimony of the Malankara Church through its communion with the Jacobite Antiochene Church. This patrimony of the Malankara Church ensures its right to ecclesial identity.

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<sup>76</sup> It is in this context that the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was known as Syro-Malankara Catholic Rite. *Rīthu* is the Malayalam rendering of "Rite" and *Rīthukār* became synonymous to Malankara Catholic Church. The usage "particular Churches or rites" (OE 2) in the documents of the Second Vatican Council is the 'hangover' of the etymological usage and the theology it represents. For more details on the notion of rite, see VALIYAVILAYIL, The Nature of a *Sui Iuris* Church, 9-59.

<sup>77</sup> MALANCHARUVIL, The *Syro-Malankara Church*, 135-140



### 2.2.4. The Recognition of the Autonomy of the Church

The Malankara Church with its apostolic patrimony has a right to autonomy in communion with the Church of Christ or Universal Church. After the Apostolic days, it lived its autonomous existence and from the time of the Portuguese, it struggled to defend it. After the split in 1653 the Malankara Church, as we have seen above, tried to re-establish communion with the Catholic Church. However, the Church always insisted on the jurisdiction over the faithful of their Church. The relationship with the Jacobite Church of Antioch was to obtain valid apostolic succession through the consecration of the Bishops and for communion. The Malankara Bishops had never felt shy of asserting and demanding the autonomy of the Malankara Church. When Mar Ivanios, expressed the willingness of the Malankara Church to communion with Rome, he had asked for the recognition of the then existing hierarchical structure of the Malankara Church. He clearly wrote:

The Holy Synod of the Catholicate consecrates Bishops and Metropolitans and performs all the functions and exercises Patriarchal powers within the Archdiocese of the Catholicate. The Holy Synod claims to itself legislative, administrative and disciplinary powers in all matters spiritual and ecclesiastical within the Archdiocese. The Holy Synod of the Catholicate prays that they be admitted into the unity of the Catholic Church, themselves retaining for the Holy Synod and for individual Bishops their jurisdiction over all the Jacobite Syrians that come into reunion...<sup>78</sup>

The memorandum made it clear that the Malankara Church was a self-governing Church with a Synod. The Catholicos who exercised patriarchal powers governed it.

On communion with the Catholic Church, Mar Ivanios was allowed to have the same jurisdiction that he held before. The Apostolic Constitution *Christo pastorum principi*<sup>79</sup> by which “in

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted from MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 142, footnote 17.

<sup>79</sup> AAS 24 (1932) 290. See its Malayalam translation in KANJIRAMUKALIL,



1932 an ecclesiastical province was established, he was appointed Archbishop-Metropolitan to the Metropolitan See of Trivandrum and thus his jurisdiction assumed the juridical figure of that of an Archbishop-Metropolitan and was limited by territorial limits. The Bishop of Tiruvalla was subject only to his Metropolitan Powers.”<sup>80</sup> The Apostolic Constitution established a hierarchy that can govern the Malankara Church. Thus Mar Ivanios managed to obtain for the Malankara Church, autonomy, which she consistently was clamouring for.<sup>81</sup>

### 2.2.5. The Malankara Church Obtains Communion with the Church of Rome.

The Malankara Church always cherished apostolic communion with Apostolic Churches, especially with the Church of Rome, wherein is the See of Peter, the chief of the Apostles and head of the college of Apostles. The Malankara Church had never compromised its identity and autonomy for the sake of communion. This is amply proved by the history of the Church. After the requests for the ritual identity and autonomy of the Church, Mar Ivanios expresses his willingness to accept the “supremacy of the Holy See, the Pope as successor of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles of our Lord”. In the second memorandum he sent to Rome, he explained further the motivation behind the memorandum. 1. The strong desire for the unity of all Christians is the inspiration behind the memorandum. 2. The Catholic Church and the Patriarchate of the West cannot be considered as one as it was never so before. The Oriental Christians like the Jacobite Church of Malankara must do everything possible to end disunity in the Christian world. 3. The attitude of the Holy See towards the Eastern Churches had been always one of a positive understanding as written in the Catholic Encyclopaedia (Mar Ivanios quotes from the Encyclopaedia).<sup>82</sup>

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*Punaraikya Rēkhakal*, 145-151.

<sup>80</sup> MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 143

<sup>81</sup> See also Mar Ivanios' letter to Mr. M.A. Chacko in INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 25.

<sup>82</sup> See the text of the memorandum in KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Punaraikya Rēkhakal*, 88-98, especially pages 96-97. The quotes from the encyclopaedia contain the

### 3. The Ecclesial Vision of Mar Ivanios

Education moulds a man and his visions. Research enables a man to verify the truths and facts he is educated in. Meditation helps a man to fathom the truths and facts he has learned. Contemplation facilitates a man to identify himself with the knowledge and wisdom he has acquired. This is true of the life of Mar Ivanios.

A scanning through the writings of Mar Ivanios presents us the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios. In all theological reflections and teachings, Mar Ivanios was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Oriental way of theologising which is founded on the Sacred Scripture, tradition and the teachings of the Fathers of the Church. It is a simple and intuitive way of breaking down the mysteries of faith in an intelligible way through the use of signs and symbols from every day life. It tries to concretise the abstract and presents the divine mysteries intelligible to ordinary human beings. However, the mystical character of divine truths is assured permanence in the human mind. This is clearly evident in his writings on the sacraments of the Eucharist (Holy *Qurbano*) and Confession. One notices the same characteristics in his works: *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, *Dhāyana Kusumangal*, *Hārdava Prārthana*, *Sabhāvatsaram*, etc. His “autobiography” *Girideepam* is characterised by the simple intuitive narrative with which he communicates the heartthrobs of his life as a monk. His pastoral letters were simple, contextual and relevant to contemporary Christian life. We have to pick out his theological reflections from these, his writings, which are the fruits of his mystical experience obtained through prayer, reflection and contemplation.

#### 3.1. The Church is the Body of Christ

One is astounded to note that even as Deacon, he had clear-cut ecclesial vision that had transcended contemporary Ecclesiology. In one of the classes he gave to the annual meeting

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teachings of the Council Florence on the conditions for union of the Western and Eastern Churches and the teachings of other Popes.



of the *Suriyani Mahāsabha*, he gave a class that deals with the principal doctrines of the Christian Church. In the part that deals with “The Mystical Body and Sacraments” he enunciates his vision on the Church and presents the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. “His body exists in the world as the Church. It is clearly ordained that the Church is the Body of Christ... We are united with the Messiah as we remain (united) with his body, the Christian Church. A Christian devotee is one who enjoys the Messiah and grows in Him and one who remains united in the Church of Christ and grows up as a true Christian.”<sup>83</sup>

This union with Christ is not a mere idea or imagination. The Christian religion is not simply that which pertains to the mind alone or to the body alone. We have to be united with Christ, with the soul and body of Christ, with our whole soul and body. This union with Christ, both in his divine and human natures, not one independent of the other, but simultaneously, takes place in a Christian through the sacraments, especially the Holy *Qurbono*. The presence of Christ promised in the Holy *Qurbono*, the fact that it is the Body and Blood of Christ, is not a mere idea, but it makes present the intended divine mysteries. The union with the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, is actually effected through the reception of the body and blood Christ in the Holy *Qurbono*.<sup>84</sup> The one who leaves the Church and the Sacraments is deserting Christ.<sup>85</sup> As Mar Ivanios sees the Church as the Body of Christ, he considers disunity in the Church as a wound in the body of Christ.<sup>86</sup> And it is a very serious sin.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 61; ID, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 6, 24.

<sup>84</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 61-62

<sup>85</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

<sup>86</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

<sup>86</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 12, 16, 24

<sup>87</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 12, 21



### 3.2. The Church Flew out of the Pierced Side of Jesus

As many Eastern Fathers, Mar Ivanios sees the Church flowing out of the pierced side of Jesus. The Church was established as blood and water flew out of Jesus' side.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.3. The Church is the New Israel, the New People of God.

In dealing with the origin and development of the liturgical year of the Church, Mar Ivanios clearly brings out the continuity of the Church with the chosen people of God, Israel. The prophecies and expectations of the Old Testament about the Messiah are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. What was hidden in the Old Testament is openly and clearly manifested in the New Testament and realized in the Church. If the old Israel is the 'stump of Jesse', the Christian Church is the branch that budded from it. If Israel is prophecy, the Christian Church is its fulfilment. According to Mar Ivanios Isaiah chapters 52, 53, 56 and 60 clearly depict this. Israel, the old catholic People of God and the Christian Church, new catholic People of God, are not two separate entities but one. The one indwells the other, the one flows out from the other. As the flower blossoms from the bud, the new has blossomed from the old.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.4. The Pneumatic Origin of the Church.

According to Mar Ivanios, "at Pentecost, when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit, the Lord established the Holy Church in this world. All his actions before that was a preparation for this."<sup>90</sup> He again writes: "The Pentecost is the birthday of the Holy Church. The birthday of the natural body of Jesus Christ is *yaldo*. In a similar way the birthday of the supernatural (*prakrityatīta sarīram*) body of Christ, that is the Holy Church, is the Pentecost. The Second "Eve" was created from "the pierced side of the Second Adam." The breath of life was breathed into the nostrils

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<sup>88</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 12, 64

<sup>89</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 9-16

<sup>90</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 9

of this “Eve” on the day of the Pentecost. And she became a living being.”<sup>91</sup> The Holy Spirit guides the Church founded on the day of the Pentecost.<sup>92</sup>

### 3.5. The Church is Eucharistic Centred.

• *Visudha Qurbāna Oru Dhyānapadanam*<sup>93</sup> (The Holy Qurbono, a Meditative Study) is one of Mar Ivanios’ central writings in which he deals with the mystery and dogma of the Holy *Qurbono* (Eucharist) leading to a month long meditation on the mystery of the Holy *Qurbono* in relation to our daily life. He presents the Holy *Qurbono* as Memorial and as a Sacrifice in which Jesus Christ is truly present with his humanity and divinity. The Eucharistic celebration is that by which the Church offers thanksgiving to God. It is through it that the Church offers her thanksgiving to God for his redemptive acts, such as, the incarnation of Christ, his life on earth, his saving sufferings, his life giving death, his victorious resurrection, his ascension, his sitting at the right hand of God, the effusion of the Holy Spirit, the saints raised by God in the Church, etc.<sup>94</sup>

In his vision of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, we saw, how the mystery of the Mystical Body is actualised in the Holy *Qurbono*. The union with the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, is actually effected through the reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy *Qurbono*.<sup>95</sup> It clearly enunciates the Eucharistic centeredness of the Church. It is another way of saying that the Eucharist makes the Church as Church celebrates and receives the Eucharist.

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<sup>91</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 64

<sup>92</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 43

<sup>93</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Qurbāna*, 22-32 This book expounds the Theology of the Eucharist as Mar Ivanios has fathomed the mystery. Beginning with a simple question-answer method the reader is lead to the depths of the mystery. It is also gives us the clue of the mystic Mar Ivanios was.

<sup>94</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Qurbāna*, 13

<sup>95</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 61-62

### 3.6. The Church Lives by Liturgy

The life of the Church is in and through her liturgical or divine worship. The liturgy is an expression of the Church. It is needless to elaborate here the attitude of the St Thomas Syrian Christians to their liturgy or worship that is an embodiment of their ecclesial, spiritual, theological and disciplinary patrimonies. In fact the history of the St. Thomas Syrian Christians is the history of their struggle to safeguard their liturgy and autonomy from latinisation. This shows the importance the Syrian Christians attach to liturgy. Mar Ivanios had inherited this patrimony of the Syrian Church and zealously tried to preserve it.

Mar Ivanios' liturgical Theology and his vision of the liturgy in the life of the Church are well portrayed in his works *Sabhāvatsaram*. This book deals with the Church that lives liturgical year of the Church. In addition to this he published in 1941 the book *Rubrics of the Malankara Qurbono*.

It is interesting to note that his staunch adherence to the Antiochene Syrian Liturgy was not a matter of traditionalism, but his pursuit to pass on to the posterity the theologically rich and spiritually enriching Liturgy in a dynamic way. He was at the forefront of the vernacularisation of the *Qurbono Thaksa*.<sup>96</sup> He was a staunch supporter of the inculturation and indigenisation of the Liturgy.<sup>97</sup>

While he consistently fought for the recognition of the “rite” of the Malankara Church in the Catholic Church, it was not a fanatic adherence to it, but a realistic approach to ecclesial life. On this he says: “The separated group came to be subjected to the power of the Antiochene Jacobite authorities and accepted their rite. The cause of division from the days of the *Kūnan Kuriṣ Satyam* is now removed. Therefore, the *Puthenkūttukar* who separated from the Church need not remain separated now. The

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<sup>96</sup> Missal

<sup>97</sup> For a brief study on this, see MARIADAS, Oru Jīvithadarsanathinte Kānāpurangal, 6-7.



desire to retain a particular rite is simply a matter of sentiment – *abhiruchi* – though it is undoubtedly true that it is difficult to renounce it for those who have lived it for the last two three centuries”<sup>98</sup> It shows that Mar Ivanios did not consider “rite” as an absolute element of ecclesiality of a people, but as a necessary means of ecclesial life.

### 3.7. The Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

Mar Ivanios firmly believed what he prayed in the Creed: “I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” And he became convinced that these four notes of the Church are realized in their fullness in the Catholic Church.<sup>99</sup> According to Mar Ivanios,

The Church of Christ is the ark of salvation for all mankind. It is the Kingdom of God founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ, God-incarnate, as a visible society, unique in its fitness to comprise all nations, extending to all regions, enduring for all times. It is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. It is the Pillar and Ground of Truth. This society which Our Lord founded is One and Indivisible, Holy and Indefectible, Catholic and All-embracing. Apostolic and Historic. The center of unity of this visible society is the institution of the Papacy which Our Lord Himself founded, choosing St. Peter as the first Pope – the Rock on which the super structure was to be built in time to come.<sup>100</sup>

### 3.8. The Church is Founded on Petrine Primacy

Mar Ivanios had actualised in his life the famous Oriental dictum, *lex orandi lex credendi* – what we believe we pray or vice versa. This is also a characteristic of Oriental Liturgy and Ecclesiology. Mar Ivanios who rose to the level of a mystic through his *sanyasa* found it a contradiction in the life of the Orthodox Church to pray and confess the primacy of Peter and his

<sup>98</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 34.

<sup>99</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 15.

<sup>100</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 2

successors in its liturgy and but to deny it when it comes to ecclesial communion. The faith of the Jacobite Church expressed in *Hūdaya Kānon* and the liturgy itself was compelling Mar Ivanios to acknowledge the Petrine primacy.<sup>101</sup>

In Mar Ivanios' dialogue with Mar Dionysius VI, his *guru*, concerning the necessity of communion with the Catholic Church, as against the view that faith is the only foundation of the Church, he says:

Another idea I would like to share with Your Eminence concerning our discussion at Parumala Seminary. It seems that Your Eminence has stated that the foundation of the Church is faith, not Peter. I answered that it is both. In fact the Lord is the foundation of the Church. The faith in the divinity of the Lord and his incarnation is the foundation of the Church. Peter who confessed this faith is the foundation of the Church. Prophets, Apostles and martyrs are all foundations of the Church. Our Syrian prayer books present this faith in so many ways like this. I don't deny any of these.<sup>102</sup>

The primacy of Peter consists in his ministry of unity and protection of the faith of the Church. He writes: "Our Lord founded only one Church. And it was on Peter. He gave the keys of this kingdom to Peter. He gave the authority to Peter to confirm his brethren in faith. He also gave to Peter the power to govern the universal Church. The true successor of Peter is the Pope of Rome. He is the universal high priest, and by God's inspiration the point of unity of the Church the world over and the protector of the pure catholic faith."<sup>103</sup> Peter is also the point of communion in the Church: "Our Lord founded the Church on rock; on Peter the rock. The Pope is the successor of Peter. As this is the truth, any attempt by any one to do anything apart from (not in communion with) him, is trying to live disunited from the Messiah."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 368-370

<sup>102</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 342

<sup>103</sup> Mar Ivanios' letter to the Jacobite Patriarch Mar Elias II quoted in INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 15. The translation is ours.

<sup>104</sup> From the letter to the Jacobite Patriarch Mar Elias II as quoted in INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 16.

### 3.9. The Church is a Communion

Mar Ivanios envisioned the Church as a communion.<sup>105</sup> It is the communion of all the faithful who believe in God, in the love of God the Father, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became incarnate to redeem the world and in the Holy Spirit, the perfecter and fulfiller of all that has been created by the Father and redeemed by the Son. The Sacraments, especially the *Holy Qurbono* is that which actualises this communion of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Hence when one turns away from the Sacraments, he loses communion with the Church. The Eucharist is that which effects the communion.

Mar Ivanios was convinced that the Catholic Church is the only Church founded by our Lord and it is this Church to which all the faithful should be united.<sup>106</sup> “The conviction that it is the will of our blessed Lord that all Christians should be united, and that the sooner the reunion is affected the better for the glory of Our Blessed Saviour. The present condition of the Christian world cannot but break the heart of any person who desires to love our blessed Lord.”<sup>107</sup> He firmly believed and emphatically proclaimed to all his higher ecclesial dignitaries “the unity of the Christian Churches is the will of God.”<sup>108</sup>

### 3.10. The Church is a Communion of Churches

“At the outset I thought of a communion with the *Rīs* Patriarch of Rome through the Catholic Patriarch of Antioch. I remembered what the late Mr. Elanjickal John Vakkīl had once said: “As the Catholic branch of the Church of Antioch was in communion with centre of unity, the See Peter in Rome, so also

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<sup>105</sup> Mar Ivanios’ vision of communion is based on his theology of communion, which we take for granted in our study. See Mar Ivanios’ speech on God-Man-Church-Sacrament relationship in INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios – I*, 51-62. Others develop such a theme. See VALUPARAMPIL, Mar Ivanios: Prophet of Cosmic Communion. See also the article “Pastoral Vision of Mar Ivanios” by James Illitharayil in this book.

<sup>106</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios – II*, 17, 21

<sup>107</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 91

<sup>108</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios – II*, 16



the Malankara Church can be directly in communion with the Patriarch of Rome.” From history we have learnt what conditions our forefathers put forward when they attempted communion with the Catholic Church. First of all they wanted to be placed under the jurisdiction of their own Bishops. Secondly they wanted that the rite in which they were habituated be recognized.”<sup>109</sup>

Mar Ivanios very clearly stated in his clarifications to the queries from Rome concerning his memorandum requesting communion that “the Patriarchate of the West and the Catholic Church are not identical and it was never considered so.”<sup>110</sup> This clearly indicates individuality of both the Roman Church as the Patriarchate of the West and the Malankara Church as a Church of apostolic origin. Hence the relation of these two Churches is a communion of Churches. Similarly his request for communion had made it clear that the Malankara Church is to be recognised independent of the Syrian Catholic Antiochene Patriarchate and distinct from the Syro-Malabar Church.<sup>111</sup> However, communion with Rome established communion with all the Churches in the Catholic Communion.

### 3.11. The Local Church is Autonomous

One of the contributions of Mar Ivanios to practical ecclesiology is the way he harmonises the concept and practice of unity, communion and autonomy in the Church. It was desire for Christian unity that was always to close his heart. He saw no room for disunity in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. The unity is obtained through a communion of all the Christian Faithful. He asserted the autonomy of the Malankara Church. The right of the Malankara Church to be autonomous is *sui generis*. It results from her apostolic foundation and growth in the local culture and tradition of India. He always asserted the rights of the local Church.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>MAR IVANIOS, Last Pastoral Letter, 6-7 See also MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 60-68, especially p. 65.

<sup>110</sup>KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Punaraikya Rēkhakal*, 96

<sup>111</sup>KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Punaraikya Rēkhakal*, 132

<sup>112</sup>See MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 20-49

### 3.12. Local Church is Indigenous.

In his speeches abroad, Mar Ivanios presented the Malankara Church as an indigenous Church. The Malankara Church is a blend of the Christian faith in the rich ancient Indian culture. They are a living witness to the fact that Christianity is not a foreign religion. Christianity in India is not an import of the European culture. It is a flower that blossomed in the plant that is deeply rooted in the rich Indian culture.<sup>113</sup>

### 3.13. Church is an Evangelising Community

Mar Ivanios believed that the Church by its very nature is a missionary or evangelising community. It is the duty of every Christian to preach the Word of God to the ends of the earth. It pained him to note that the St. Thomas Christian Church had kept under the bushel the Gospel lamp it had received from Apostle Thomas. He burnt with the zeal to proclaim the Word of God to all Indians and to win their hearts for the Gospel message. This zeal was the initial inspiration for him to found a missionary congregation in the Malankara Church.<sup>114</sup>

The goal of evangelisation is the total liberation of man. This, his manifesto, is stated very clearly in his autobiography, *Girideepam* when he deals with Bethany missionary activities. Conversion is a total liberation of man, which is the result of a free self-determination. Neither the upliftment of social status nor economic gains shall induce a man to embrace Christianity. If one cannot exercise one's God given freedom it is a very pitiable condition. It is the desire for freedom, not the desire to enjoy the wide-open social status of Christianity that should be the motive behind conversion. Liberation from spiritual decadence is the prime goal of evangelisation, not the downtrodden status of man. However, since Christianity is liberative by its very nature, the two go hand in hand.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 232-233

<sup>114</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 69-71

<sup>115</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 147-148

### 3.14. Church and Monastic Life

Apart from the spiritual renewal that he envisioned through the monastic life he established in the church, he planted monasticism at the heart of the Malankara Church. According to the Oriental ecclesial spiritual tradition, monasticism is the core of ecclesial life. In the nineteen centuries of the life of the Malankara Church, we hardly come across monastic life that is the source of the spiritual and ecclesiastical life in the Christian Orient. In India *sanyāsa* is what nurtures the Hindu religious traditions and life. By founding the Order of the Imitation of Christ, which came to be known as Bethany Ashram, Mar Ivanios filled this great void in the ecclesial life of the Malankara Church.

On the role of monasticism in the Church, Mar Ivanios had a clear vision. For him, monastic life “is the most convenient and eminent means to glorify God and to do good to others.”<sup>116</sup> *Sanyāsa* is the realisation of God (*daivasampādanam*). Only *sanyāsis* can be true missionaries in the Church.<sup>117</sup> He considers a religious community as a Church within the Holy Church. This “small Church” is the heart of the Holy Church.<sup>118</sup> Speaking on the relation of a monk to the religious community and to the Church, he writes: “The Bethany religious community called the Order of the Imitation of Christ is your spiritual mother and the heart of the Holy Church. She is most holy and loving. In Christ Jesus she bears you in her womb. She gives birth to you in heaven. Therefore, you love the Bethany religious community.”<sup>119</sup> The ultimate goal of ascetical life is the realization of the Messiah and his mystical body the Church in the monk’s life. A religious community is the replica of the Christian community living in charity. God renews the Church through the Religious (*sanyāsi*).<sup>120</sup> Mar Ivanios turns mystical in his vision of the relation a *sanyāsi* has with the Church: “As John rested leaning to the breast of

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<sup>116</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 71

<sup>117</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Yogam*, 69-70, ID, *Girideepam*, 60-61

<sup>118</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 15

<sup>119</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 42-43

<sup>120</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 64-66



Jesus, the *sanyāsi* rests in Jesus in holy contemplation. As John took care of the Mother (Mary), a *sanyāsi* protects the catholic Church.”<sup>121</sup>

#### 4. An Appraisal of Mar Ivanios’ Ecclesial Vision

The ecclesial vision or Ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios is one of his contributions to the Christian world in general and to Catholic communion in particular. His vision gave a new impetus to the Theology of Church unity or Ecumenism. His vision gave a boost to the Theology of communion in the Church. He contributed greatly to the Theology of communion of Churches in the Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesiologies.

His visions on the Church transcended some of the contemporary ecclesiological visions developed in the Catholic Church of his time and officially taught in the Church, especially by Second Vatican Council.

##### 4.1. The Ecclesial Vision of Mar Ivanios and the Ecclesiology of Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council is known for its communion Ecclesiology. The various relations in the Church are viewed from the perspective of communion. The relation among the living members of the Church is effected through communion (LG 14, 22) while it is the bond of communion that unites the living members of the Church with those who passed to eternal life ahead of us (LG 50, 51). This living, dynamic, Christocentric and Pneumatic relationship of the Church with Christ and among its members is best expressed by the Biblical imagery of the Mystical Body of Christ (1Cor 12.12-31; LG 7). As we know, this teaching of the Council is in continuity with the teaching of Pope Pius XII initiated in his famous encyclical letter *Mystici corporis* (29 June 1943).

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<sup>121</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitah Sahāyi*, 81

In our analysis of the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios, we have seen that, he had already conceived the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and began to present and preach so. From this deep insight follows his vision of the Church as a communion and the structure of the Universal Church as a communion of Churches. As he sees an organic unity within this Mystical Body, any disunity in the Church is a wound in the Body of Christ. Hence his vision of Christian unity is an imperative to all true followers of Christ who willed that 'all be one, as Jesus and the Father are one.'

The same vision extends itself further in his vision of the exercise of primatial power in the Church. Jesus Christ is the head of the Mystical Body. This body incarnate in the world is the Church. As Christ is the invisible head of the Mystical Body, he made Peter the head of the Apostles and the visible head of the Church. Hence the successor of Peter as the head of the successors of the Apostles is the visible head of the Church today. Thus the Pope is the bond of communion in the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church.

#### **4.2. The Ecclesial Vision of Mar Ivanios vis-à-vis the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches**

The communion ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council is translated into canonical language in the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches. As we have seen above, in the hierarchical structuring of the Church, the communion Ecclesiology of the Council is restricted to a communion of the Universal Church with particular Churches in the sense of dioceses and thereby also a communion or collegiality of the Roman Pontiff with the College of Bishops. The communion of Churches doesn't find a direct reference in the documents of the Council although this notion is not excluded.

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) also follows the same approach in the question of communion in ecclesial relations. The Churches in the Catholic communion are acknowledged as individual *sui iuris* or autonomous Churches. CCEO c 1 says: "The

canons of this Code affect all and solely the Eastern Catholic Churches, unless, with regard to relations with the Latin Church, it is expressly stated otherwise". Canon 27 describes a *sui iuris* Church as "a group of Christian faithful united by a hierarchy according to the norm of law which the supreme authority of the Church expressly or tacitly recognises as *sui iuris*." These canons and the application of these canons in the subsequent parts of the Code amply declare that the Universal Catholic Church is a communion of Churches with each Church being autonomous in it, with a hierarchy that has power of self-governance.

Thus Mar Ivanios' vision of the autonomy of a Church in the universal communion of the Churches, which was actualised in the establishment of the Malankara Church in the Catholic Communion, finds its canonical expression in the CCEO.<sup>122</sup>

### **4.3. Mar Ivanios' Ecclesial Vision Fosters Communion not Uniatism**

The Oriental Churches that lost communion with the Church of Christ always struggled to restore the lost communion. From time to time in the history of the Church, this Spirit of Communion has led portions of the Faithful of the Oriental Churches to commune with the Church of Rome. The communion with the Church of Rome automatically brings about communion with Churches that are in communion with the Church of Rome. Thus, there exists a communion of Churches, which the true followers of Christianity always long for. In its numerical extension, it is imperfect, but it is a prefiguration of the Communion that we long for.

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<sup>122</sup> However, it has to be noted that the Code does not fully adhere to the oriental view of the structure of the Universal Church. The Oriental view expressed as follows did not find its full expression in the CCEO: "a) Jesus Christ is the unique and true head of the Church; b) the Bishop of Rome, who is successor of Peter in primacy over the universal Church, is vicar of Christ, vicar of blessed Peter and takes the place of blessed Peter; c) the Bishops are the successors of the Apostles; d) the Catholic Church is divided into patriarchates, etc.; e) the Bishop of Rome is the Primate of the Church; f) the Bishop of Rome is the Patriarch of the West; g) the Patriarchs have their patriarchal rights." [*Communicationes* 6 (1974) 63]



Instead of acknowledging the present Oriental Catholic Churches as Churches in communion, to which all long for, there is a tendency among critics to consider them as stumbling blocks in the way of Christian communion and ecumenism. They call these Churches “Uniate.”<sup>123</sup> In fact, they are the existential answer to the quest of the conscience of man. To brand them as “wolves in sheep clothing” or as “sheep stealing” is simply the answer to a human temptation to consider those who are not with us are against us. These Churches are “bridges” for the Orthodox Churches to cross over to full communion of the Church of Christ. Today the Oriental Catholic Churches are the actual witnesses to the world of ecclesial identity and communion in the Universal Church.

The ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios fosters communion. He was convinced of the Spirit of God moving him. He was answering the dictates of his conscience. From history he learnt a lesson. He learnt that communion is the source of true ecclesial life.

#### **4.4. Mar Ivanios’ Ecclesial Vision vis-à-vis the Present Canonical Status of the Malankara Church**

Mar Ivanios’ genius comes out best in his active ecclesial life than in abstract theologising. The matrix in which Mar Ivanios developed his ecclesial vision is the St. Thomas Syrian Christian Malankara Church. He had a very prophetic role to play in the twentieth century Church, especially in the ardent quest for Christian unity and Ecumenism. Mar Ivanios saw communion as the only remedy to the divisions and litigations in the Malankara Church. He had very well foreseen that relation with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch would not bring about peace in the Church.

In this age of ecumenism and Christian desire for communion, there is no place for polemics. However, to achieve this cherished end a Christian today needs to possess an openness

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<sup>123</sup> For an elaboration of the concept of “uniatism” see PANICKER, *Malankara Catholic Church*, 119-123.

to “the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17), who ‘reminds us of everything that Jesus taught us’ (Jn 14:26).

#### 4.4.1. The Ecclesiologico-Canonical Status of the Malankara Orthodox Church

It can be noted that in his ecclesial vision, Mar Ivanios had not for a moment wavered from the vision and endeavours of his predecessors in the field, the prelates of the Malankara Church, who longed for catholic communion. He had also not wavered for a moment from the oriental genius of ecclesial vision. He was led by the dictum that “truth is one, not many”<sup>124</sup> and that “one shall not serve the community more than God.”<sup>125</sup> He had not compelled any one, even his disciples, the Bethanians, to follow him to the Catholic Church. They were left to the decisions of their own conscience. However, he was convinced of the truth that he was following. He was led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It was the grace of the Lord and providence that strengthened him to take the difficult decision. In doing so, it was the ardent desire for Christian communion, the desire to win over the whole of India for Christ and serve the Lord and his Vicar on earth that was the guiding force. Hence he could put up with all the challenges and persecutions he had to face on his communion with the Catholic Church. It is was the joy of communion that he cherished, not any personal success.<sup>126</sup>

To picture the communion of Mar Ivanios with the Catholic Church as a betrayal of the Malankara Orthodox is the negation of the Spirit who blows where he wills. From what the Malankara Catholic Church today is, one can judge the veracity of the following Orthodox contention:

Mar Dionysius VI refused to consider union with Rome mainly on account of two reasons. In the first place, he knew that the plan of Mar Ivanios would lead only to the absorption of the Church of Malankara by the Roman

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<sup>124</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 41

<sup>125</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 112

<sup>126</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 47, 86-87, 92, 96-97

Catholic Church. This indeed was the very thing which the Indian Church had all along been resisting from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, Mar Dionysius believed that the Malankara Syrian Church, as a section of the great Eastern Orthodox ecclesiastical tradition had its own contribution to make in the Indian context, and he did not want that to be lost by being absorbed into the Church of Rome.

As we shall see, Mar Dionysius VI was not opposed to Church union; neither was he unreasonably conservative to the point of being narrow-minded. But he had an appreciation for the Indian Church, which he keenly cherished. As regards the plan of Mar Ivanios, he felt it was tantamount to a betrayal of a heritage entrusted to him by God. In fact, when we look back on what the archbishop did in joining the Church of Rome, we shall realize that it did not really achieve anything particularly impressive for the cause of Christian unity in Kerala; it created only another division in the Church.<sup>127</sup>

Let us look at what the Malankara Catholic Church today is and 'judge the tree from the fruits.' A simple look at the fate of the Malankara Orthodox Church today will prove to any seeker of truth that the way Mar Ivanios treaded is the only way for ecclesial communion, progress and peace in the Malankara Church today. We need not elaborate this. Had the entire Orthodox Church stood up to communion in 1930, the Malankara Church would have been a great Patriarchal Church in Catholic communion today. Better be late than never!<sup>128</sup>

All those Churches that splintered away from the St. Thomas Christian Community to protect their autonomy and ecclesial identity expressed in their spiritual, liturgical, disciplinary and

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<sup>127</sup> SAMUEL, *Truth Triumphs*, 65 Rev. V.C. Samuel terms the communion movement of Mar Ivanios a betrayal. Then how does he justify his leaving the Patriarch's party and joining the Catholicos party? He has a justification. See his confession in the Preface of the book. Is not the same law applicable to others?

<sup>128</sup> See also the letter of Mar Ivanios to M.A. Chacko in INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 26.



cultural patrimony only ended up in conforming themselves to the patrimonies of those Churches with whom they came into contact. The Catholics who were one with St. Thomas Christian Church made it part of their life the western dogmatic faith of the Roman Catholic Church. The Marthoma Church who came into contact with the Protestant missionaries assimilated the Protestant theology. The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church made its own the patrimony of the Antiochene Church that is pre-Chalcedonian.<sup>129</sup>

Autocephaly as proclaimed by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church is akin to the catholicity of the Church. This is a product of the Byzantine Orthodox Churches to which Orthodox Theologians themselves have not reconciled with. “The throne of St. Thomas the Apostle” is no substitute for Orthodoxy of apostolic faith. It is an unheard of claim in the Christian Church. If St. Thomas had a throne, where would that be? After analysing these anomalous claims of autocephaly, G. Panicker observes: “The group of St. Thomas Christians who call themselves now the Orthodox Church of India has not only rejected the ecclesiology based on the primacy of St. Peter so well repeatedly mentioned in their liturgical books and tradition, but also has rejected the “Orthodox” ecclesiology of primacy.”<sup>130</sup> While autocephaly has its on pitfalls, clinging unduly to the throne of Antioch is a self-effacement at the cost of ecclesial identity and autonomy.

#### **4.4.2. The Canonical Status of the Malankara Catholic Church**

The direct inheritor of the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios is the Malankara Catholic Church. The oriental ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios looked at the self-governance of the Church as synodal. This he had requested in his memorandum to Rome. Rome

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<sup>129</sup> See CHEDIATH, *Paurastya Catholicos*, 125.

<sup>130</sup> PANICKER, *Malankara Catholic Church*, 126

had, in fact, not denied this request.<sup>131</sup> At the time of accepting Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos into the Catholic Communion, a hierarchy was not established. At the time of communion, since the Catholicos was not willing for the communion, the issue of the Catholicate was shelved. Hence analysing the hierarchical status of the Malankara Catholic Church, C. Malancharuvil (presently Cyril Mar Baselios OIC, the Metropolitan of the Malankara Catholic Church) wrote long ago:

If we take into account the nature of the Syro-Malankara Church as a particular Church, the inadequacy of the present hierarchical structure is clearly noticeable, especially because in the new canonical legislations the Metropolitan powers are insufficient to guide a particular Church.

Therefore the fullness of the hierarchical structure of the Syro-Malankara Church is to be found in the hierarchical system of the Malankara Church itself in which we find a Catholicos with his synod exercising Patriarchal powers.<sup>132</sup>

Even after the promulgation of the new legislation for the Oriental Churches in 1990, the canonical status of the Malankara Catholic Church remains the same. The new Code that is applicable to all the Oriental Catholic Churches envisages the individuality and autonomy of the Churches. The juridical personality or individuality of the Church is well protected while the power of governance or autonomy is relative in accordance with the grade of the hierarchy that governs the Church. The powers of the Churches headed by Patriarchs and Major-Archbishops who though do not have the patriarchal title enjoy greater power of self-governance than Metropolitans who are

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<sup>131</sup> In reply to the memorandum of the Mar Ivanios, the Holy See observed: "Since the present Catholicos is not willing for the communion, it is appropriate to consider it later. If he comes into communion the matter shall be then considered". KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Punaraikya Rēkhakal*, 132

<sup>132</sup> MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 144

heads of Churches grouped as Metropolitan Churches. The juridical hierarchical figure of the Malankara Catholic Church is a Metropolitan.<sup>133</sup>

Now, it is the right of this Church to vindicate her rights. The Malankara Catholic Church has “become one of the fastest growing Catholic Communities in the world, boasting large numbers of vocations to the priesthood and religious life and your *pusillus grex* is home to many educational and welfare institutions”<sup>134</sup> recounted the Roman Pontiff who greeted the Malankara Catholic Hierarchs on their *Ad Limina Apostolorum* Visit to Rome on 13 May 2003. After the installation of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Hierarchy in 1932, has this Church ever officially made a request to the Roman Pontiff to upgrade its hierarchy? To the best of my knowledge no such request has been made so far.<sup>135</sup> Creating precedence has its effect later!<sup>136</sup> The

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<sup>133</sup>“A metropolitan Church *sui iuris* is presided over by a metropolitan of a determined see who is appointed by the Roman Pontiff and assisted by a council of hierarchs according to the norm of law.” (c 155 § 1) According to this canon and as treated elsewhere in the Code, the Metropolitan can exercise supraepiscopal powers over the Bishops of the Church, who are his suffragans. He can constitute a council of Hierarchs, a Council consisting of all the Bishops of the Church. This Council is to assist him in the governance of the Church according to the norm of law. He enjoys executive powers according to the provisions of the Code. However, the power of a Metropolitan *sui iuris* Church to govern itself with legislative, executive and judicial powers is very limited. The Episcopal body of the Church does not have the synodal status. Hence the ecclesial government is not synodal in form. It is dependent very much on the Roman Pontiff or the Apostolic See. The Roman Pontiff directly appoints the Metropolitan and the Bishops of the Church. Though it is said that the Council of Hierarchs of this Church has legislative powers, the particular laws legislated by the council can be promulgated only after and transmitting it to the Apostolic See and getting the written notification from the Apostolic See.

<sup>134</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*: Bishops of the Syro-Malankara Rite, 5

<sup>135</sup> The Ukrainian Catholic Church was raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church as a follow up of the intervention of its hierarchical head in the Second Vatican Council. Recently they have requested to raise their Church to a Patriarchal Church [See the news in *Sathyadeepam* 43/77 (16 June 2004) 15]. The Syro-Malabar Church obtained the hierarchical status of Major Archiepiscopal Church recently. One may think that, the Syro-Malankara



great visionary Mar Ivanios has handed over the torch of faith to us. Let us keep it burning to hand it over to generations.

## Conclusion

After an analysis of the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios in its various theological contexts, we now try to sum up our study with an emphasis on the relevance of the vision today. Our study confirms that the vision of the Church has undergone a gradual evolution. The Church structures were constituted in accordance with the evolving vision of the Church. The multiplicity of ecclesial visions had also caused divisions in the Church. Mar Ivanios encountered the various push and pulls of the contemporary ecclesial existence in order to remove the chaff from the corn. His ecclesial vision is the synthesis of the best elements of the orthodox-catholic ecclesiology.

The Church of Kerala, from time immemorial, known as the Church of Malabar or as the Church of Malankara is the fruit of the evangelising endeavours of St. Thomas the Apostle of Jesus. It was also known as the St. Thomas Christian Church. This Church remained an autonomous Church, but in communion with other Churches, such as the East Syrian Church, the Church of Rome, etc. However, the imposition of the hegemony of other

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Catholic Church is not large in size. But in numbers we are much more than some of the present patriarchal Churches. It is high time that we forward a request to the Roman Pontiff on the merit of our Church as a fast growing Church and on the merit of the reply given by the Holy See in July 1930 to the request of Mar Ivanios in 1926. We have quoted this above.

<sup>136</sup> On this Cyril Mar Baselios observes: "First of all we should realize that the Malankara Catholic Church, though acknowledged as an autonomous Church in the Catholic Communion, remains in fact one of the fractions of the Malankara community... In fact, the juridical and structural debility felt at present by the Malankara Catholic Church, and for that matter by many of the oriental Catholic Churches, is rooted in this internal divisions and actual estrangement it suffers from its own community. Can the Catholic Oriental Churches ever establish their specific ecclesial individuality independent of and unrelated to their Orthodox counterparts, especially when they constitute a majority?" (Ecclesial Perspectives, 10-11)

Churches, like the Church of Rome and the Syrian Jacobite Church of Antioch undermined the autonomy and patrimony of the Church in the course of time. The assertion of the identity and autonomy of this Church resulted in the loss of communion of the Church with other Churches. The St. Thomas Syrian Christian Church is now organised as various distinct Churches and ecclesial communities, but with the ardent quest for communion among them. It is in this context that Mar Ivanios rose up on the ecclesial horizon as a harbinger of communion and as a prophet of Christian unity.

Our analysis of the ecclesial history of the Malankara Church compels us to understand that it cherished its autonomous existence. The Church was not simply engaged in protecting its autonomy, but also in preserving its ecclesial identity stemming from its apostolic foundation and ritual heritage. Mar Ivanios learned his practical lesson in Ecclesiology from the ecclesial life, as it existed in his time. His experience with and vision of the St. Thomas Syrian Church convinced him that communion among the Christian Churches and communion with the Church of Rome are the two imperatives of Christian ecclesial existence. Thus it can be said that Mar Ivanios' ecclesiology and ecclesial vision is a vision of communion.

Our study of the Ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios shows that his vision is a recapitulation of the Oriental vision of the Church. The Church as a human reality and as a divine mystery is well brought out in his vision of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. The Pneumatic origin of the Church is a constant theological refrain in the life of the Church of the Oriental world. Similarly the vision of the Eucharistic centeredness of the Church highlights the centrality of the *Holy Qurbono* in the life of the Church. This is thoroughly an oriental view.

The Church, the New People of God brought together on the day of the Pentecost (Pneumatic origin of the Church), is the

Mystical Body of Christ. The symbolic depiction that the Church flew out of the pierced side of Jesus, that the Church is Eucharistic centred are all but expressions and enforcement of the vision of the Church as *communion*. This Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, is founded on the primacy of Peter. Peter's ministry is continued in the Church through the Pope as the successor of Peter. The Church is nurtured by its liturgy and monastic life. This Church that came to be established in historical circumstances and through divine providence lives its life in the place where it is implanted through a process of inculturation and indigenisation. The Church continues its existence through its task of evangelisation. The local Church has a right to communion and autonomy in the universal Church.

The vision of communion in the Church and the communion of Churches found its expression in the communion of the St. Thomas Malankara Syrian Church with the Church of Rome. The Malankara Catholic Church is the fruition of the ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios. He consistently and convincingly strived towards an indwelling and abiding communion in the Malankara. Though the Malankara Catholic Church has not attained a perfect synodal hierarchical structure, the Church is a distinct autonomous Church in the communion of the universal Catholic Church. It exists as a symbol of the aspirations of generations of the People of God of the Malankara Church beckoning each and every one to communion in the Church of Christ.

The vision of the Church as a communion endured the test of times, although the emphasis on communion itself had been relegated to the backyard. The Church as a whole has recaptured this ontological bond of its relationship both within and outside it. The Second Vatican Council lays emphasis on collegiality within the Church and in her relationship with other Churches collegiality needs to be a synonym of communion. The Ecumenical movement for Christian unity is founded on the principle of communion. Thus communion occupies the centre stage in Christian relations although the Church has to still fathom its ontological and



existential implications. The brilliance of the vision of Mar Ivanios is well brought out as we fall back in time and see that he was a proponent of this vision much before the Second Vatican Council.

Similarly, history proves that the vision of Mar Ivanios is the only answer to the plight of the Malankara Orthodox Church today. Communion brings people together. The lack of it scatters people apart.

Orthodoxy is orthopraxis. Communion safeguards the unity and the catholicity of the Church. It is a shield against the extremes of uniformity and monolithic structuring of the Church. It is a guarantee against 'ecclesial nationalism' or 'autocephaly'. It safeguards autonomy against absolute independence. Communion fosters the catholicity of the Church as against today's nationalistic tendencies, which tend to identify the Church with the nation states as recognised by the political society. Communion fosters the identity of the local Church based on its apostolic foundation, patrimony, cultural heritage, indigenous and 'inculturated' existence.



# Liturgy as a Means of Union with God

*Mar Ivanios' Vision on Liturgy*

Kuriakose Kulapurath OIC

## 0. Introduction

Half a century after the demise of Mar Ivanios, the great prophet of the liturgical spirituality and spiritual renewal we set out on a journey to explore the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios. It is universally admitted that the liturgy occupies a significant role in the life of the Church. It is the mainstay of the Church. It is through liturgy that we express our faith in Christ and participate in the mystery of salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ. In fact, liturgy encompasses all the aspects of Christian life. There is a growing tendency to forget the significant role of liturgy, and to relegate liturgy to mere cultic observances. "Liturgy has been narrowed to a ceremony performed publicly by the priest before a passive congregation for the honour and glory of God, and theologically liturgy was reduced to the essential minimum required to 'confect' a sacrament"<sup>1</sup>. As a consequence, liturgy fails to address the modern man who is in search of a radical spirituality. He confronts varied and complex challenges in the form of consumerism, materialism, family disruption, etc. It is in this context that we try to rediscover and understand the

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in KAKKANATT, *Chirstological Catechesis*, 227

significance of the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios in order to effect a radical spirituality and spiritual enlightenment in the Church.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this article has three parts. In the first part, we seek to study the nature and characteristics of the Malankara liturgy, which Mar Ivanios inherited as his spiritual patrimony. It also seeks to spell out the intimate relationship between liturgy and other aspects of Christian life such as spirituality, ecclesial life, scripture, theology, etc. A considerable portion is also devoted to deal with the intrinsic unity between liturgy and salvation history, liturgy and the sacred scripture, liturgy and theology, etc. It is hoped that this will serve as an aid to understand the liturgical and theological background of Mar Ivanios, who was born and brought up in the Malankara liturgical tradition, in shaping his vision on Liturgy.

In the second part we try to explore the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios and its various dimensions. It is primarily done by analysing his writings and acts. This is followed by an appraisal of the vision. The significance of the vision is examined and evaluated on the basis of its effectiveness and relevance in responding to the specific problems of the time. This humble attempt of presenting the vision of Mar Ivanios on liturgy is expected to help us to rediscover and appreciate his vision and to apply it to our context in order to build up an authentic spirituality, based on the liturgy.

## **1. Malankara Liturgy: The Foundation of Mar Ivanios' Vision on Liturgy**

Liturgy is the main spring of Christian life. Malankara liturgy, which Mar Ivanios inherited as his spiritual legacy, played a significant role in shaping his vision on Liturgy. Here, after providing an overview of liturgy, we try to get a glimpse of the nature and the characteristics of the Malankara liturgy, the foundation of Mar Ivanios' vision on liturgy. We also seek to explicate the intimate relationship between Malankara liturgy and spirituality, Malankara liturgy and ecclesial life, Malankara liturgy



and Scripture, Malankara liturgy and theology, etc, in order to understand its impact on Mar Ivanios.

### 1.1. The Notion of Liturgy

The Christian belief is that God created human beings in his image and likeness (Gen 1:27). As a creature, there is an inner urge in the human person to admire the Creator, God. This admiration is expressed in the form of ritual worship. It has taken on a wide diversity of forms. The Christian worship is generally designated by the term 'liturgy'. The word liturgy is derived from the Greek word 'leitourgia' which means a function undertaken on behalf of the people: fitting out a ship, preparing a feast or doing any public service<sup>2</sup>.

Later the Church took over this idea and liturgy began to be used to designate the officially ordered worship of the Church<sup>3</sup>. The core of liturgy is the commemoration of the salvific work of God accomplished in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. Through the liturgy, the Church participates in the divine mystery of salvation, acknowledges the greatness of God, and offers worthy adoration to God. The Second Vatican Council's decree on the sacred liturgy provides us an authentic understanding of the nature of the liturgy.

The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses, and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In it, full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree (SC 7).

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<sup>2</sup> RAHNER, *Sacramendum Mundi*, 320.

<sup>3</sup> SOLOVEY, *Eastern Liturgical Theology*, 26

The liturgy, besides being a divine institution, is the product of many centuries of evolution. It is both the work of God and man. Jesus Christ is the true author but its external form is the work of the Church<sup>4</sup>.

## 1.2. A Historical Brief of the Malankara Liturgy

The Risen Jesus entrusted his disciples with a mission to proclaim the Good News and to be His witnesses 'to the ends of the earth' (Lk 24:48, Acts 1:8). Subsequently the apostles went to the different parts of the world and proclaimed the Good News and formed Christian communities. "The apostles proclaimed and taught the same gospel truth in all the places. But in relation to the cultural, linguistic, political and religious background of different regions, in the first century itself different Churches were formed"<sup>5</sup>. Jerusalem, Rome, Antioch, etc. were some of the important centres where Christian communities flourished in leaps and bounds.

The Indian Church traces its origin to the preaching of St. Thomas, the apostle of Jesus. He founded a Christian community in Kerala. This Christian community began to flourish gradually. But the advent of the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century opened a new chapter in the history of the St. Thomas Christians, and they became instrumental in dividing the St. Thomas Christian community into two groups. The Portuguese attempt to 'Latinise' the St. Thomas Christians created tension and problems in the Church. This opposition had its culmination in the historic *Koonan Cross Oath* of 1653, which virtually divided the St. Thomas Christians into *Puthenkūttukār* and *Pazhayakūttukār*. The latter remained united to the Latin bishops and the former formed an independent Church and later entered into communion with the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch and adopted the Antiochene liturgy<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> SOLOVEY, *Eastern Liturgical Theology*, 77

<sup>5</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 28

<sup>6</sup> THOTTATHIL, *The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church*, 155 The main liturgical families are divided into two: Western and Eastern. The fundamental types are four: Antiochene and Alexandrian in the East, and Roman and Gallican in the West. In the Antiochene type, we have the following: west Syrian, East Syrian,

Since 1653, attempts were made to reunite the *Puthenkūttukār* with the Catholic Church. This dream was realized under the dynamic leadership of Mar Ivanios on 20 September 1930 with his communion with the Universal Catholic Church along with his followers. With this historic event, the Malankara Catholic Church came into existence. When Mar Ivanios entered into communion with the Catholic Church he preferred to retain the Antiochene liturgical traditions and practices. The Holy See of Rome granted the Malankara Catholic Church permission to follow the Antiochene liturgy. As used in the Malankara Catholic Church today, it is called the Malankara liturgy.

### 1.2.1. Malankara Liturgy as the Unfolding of the Salvation History

We have already seen that liturgy primarily means the commemoration and celebration of the salvific deeds of God performed in the history of salvation. Those salvific deeds become a living and active experience for us in and through the liturgy.<sup>7</sup> God's plan for the salvation of humankind was accomplished by the paschal mystery of Christ, which includes his passion, death, resurrection and glorious ascension. The Church celebrates this paschal mystery of Christ, which is re-enacted in the liturgy so that everyone in the world can experience it<sup>8</sup>.

The Eucharistic celebration of the Malankara liturgy is an excellent example of the step-by-step re-enactment of the salvation

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Byzantine, and Armenian. The Antiochene Orthodox and Catholic Churches the Malankara Orthodox and Catholic Churches in India, and the Maronite Church use the West Syrian liturgy. For further details, see SOLOVEY, *Eastern Liturgical Theology*, 93 – 103. Mar Ivanios was born and brought up in the Malankara Orthodox Church. When he came into communion with the Catholic Church, he preferred to retain the Antiochene liturgy. Antiochene Liturgy is considered as one of the oldest and richest oriental liturgical families of the Church. The Anaphora of St. James is the core of Antiochene Liturgy. According to ancient tradition, the rite of Antioch, which is known as the liturgy of St. James, is none other than the original rite of Jerusalem as it was celebrated by James, 'the brother of the Lord' in the Church at Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup> KALLARANGATT, *Church as the Meeting Place*, 40

<sup>8</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy*, 31



history starting with creation and ending with the second coming of Jesus, the Parousia<sup>9</sup>. “Its very structure upholds the events of salvation from creation to Parousia and leads one through the forgiveness of sins and remission of punishment to a growth in holiness”<sup>10</sup>. The first part of the Holy Eucharist recalls the first phase of the salvation history starting from creation to the coming of Jesus Christ. The public service proclaims the Christ’s incarnation, public life, redemptive mysteries of passion, death, resurrection and ascension. This salvation history continues in the Church by the work of the Holy Spirit and she waits for the second coming of Jesus where the recapitulation of all things in Christ takes place<sup>11</sup>. The liturgical year of the Malankara Catholic Church is also arranged in such a manner that the whole redemptive life of Christ is re-enacted in an efficacious way<sup>12</sup>. The daily prayers too stand out in unfolding the salvation history. “In the daily prayers, which are divided into seven ‘hours’ the salvation history from creation to the final resurrection is evoked in a living manner”<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, the Nicene Creed can be considered as the most comprehensive statement of salvation history in its Trinitarian and ecclesial form.

### 1.2.2. The Scripture as the Foundation of the Malankara Liturgy

The Holy Scripture occupies a prominent place in all the liturgies. The most fundamental aspect of the oriental liturgy is its scriptural foundation or rootedness. In accordance with the venerable tradition of the east, the Malankara Church accords adequate place to the Word of God in her liturgy. In fact, the very source of her liturgy is the Word of God. “Malankara liturgy is rooted in biblical tradition; Holy Scripture is its very substance; it is mostly biblical commentaries

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<sup>9</sup> See KARICHAL, *Malankara Qurbana*, 39.

<sup>10</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 57

<sup>11</sup> *The Order of the Holy Qurbano*, 15 See also KARICHAL, *Malankara Qurbana*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 50

<sup>13</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 54. For further details see *The Book of Common Prayer of the Syrian Church*, 218, 249, 312.

of the Fathers of the patristic period”<sup>14</sup>. The great fathers of the Church composed the liturgical prayers of the Malankara Church after a profound meditation and reflection on the Sacred Scripture. The divine office consists of prayers and supplications interspersed with psalms and quotations from the Old and the New Testaments<sup>15</sup>. There is hardly any liturgical service, which does not have quotations and references from the Bible. We can very well say that “all the mysteries of the Christian faith—Holy Trinity, Incarnation, the Cross, the resurrection of the Redeemer, the second coming, the Church, the bride of Christ, Mary, the Mother of God, the communion of saints, the end of man etc. - are unveiled in the light of scriptural teaching in Malankara liturgy”<sup>16</sup>.

### 1.2.3. Malankara Liturgy as the Centre of the Ecclesial Life

The liturgy forms the centre of the Church’s life. “Liturgy is the transfiguring experience of the mystery of Christ in the Church. Any liturgical celebration is an attempt of the Church as a community to experience the Christ-event through signs and symbols, and thus to be transformed or transfigured to the person of Jesus Christ”.<sup>17</sup> The Second Vatican Council in its decree on Sacred Liturgy summarizes the pivotal role of liturgy in the life of the Church in the following words: “liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed: it is also the fount from which all her power flows.” (SC 10) In fact, ecclesial life is rooted on two pillars – liturgy and faith<sup>18</sup>.

The ecclesial life of the Malankara Catholic Church is centred on the liturgy. It is through the liturgical life that she signifies the mystery of Christ. Her life of prayer is lived in and through the liturgical celebrations. Unlike western spirituality, which gives great stress on pious and private devotions, Malankara spirituality

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<sup>14</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 48

<sup>15</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *Malankara Catholic Church*, 91

<sup>16</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 122

<sup>17</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Liturgy Experience*, 24

<sup>18</sup> KALLARANGATT, *Church as the Meeting Place*, 37

is liturgical in nature. The words of L. Moolaveetil illustrate the intimate relationship between the Malankara liturgy and her ecclesial life: “The Malankara Church, living in vivid touch with the liturgical worship and thereby in close union with the saving dispensation of Christ, fosters a spirituality, which is deep rooted in the mystery revealed and celebrated in the Church.”<sup>19</sup>

#### 1.2.4. Malankara Liturgy - A Communitarian Celebration

Since liturgy is essentially an ecclesial celebration, it is naturally a communitarian celebration. Chelsyn Jones reiterates this fact by saying “all liturgies are formed and formulated in view of the participation of the entire ecclesia.”<sup>20</sup> The Second Vatican Council understands liturgy as “the public worship performed by the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members.” (SC7) It implies that true and full worship is always an act of the entire members of the body of Christ, the Church. “Worship has to be in community. He who has not felt in his bones his own solidarity with the rest of mankind has not yet known the heart of worship.”<sup>21</sup>

In the East, especially in the Malankara tradition “liturgy is understood as the centre of the living local community and hence always solemn and frequented by large number of faithful. The celebration itself may be less frequent, but always in community.”<sup>22</sup> It is also interesting to note that, “this community, however is not limited to those physically present at worship. It spreads its arms to include all the faithful, and all mankind, that bows down to worship the creator. It goes back to the past and forward to the “last day” to include “all those who have pleased God” from Adam to the Parousia.”<sup>23</sup> In other words liturgy is the

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<sup>19</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 47

<sup>20</sup> JONES, *The Study of Spirituality*, 20

<sup>21</sup> VERGHESE, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 19

<sup>22</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy*, 90

<sup>23</sup> VERGHESE, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 19 See also the *Order of the Holy Qurbano*, 15



celebration of the entire eschatological community. Mary, the mother of God, saints, the dead, etc., all participate in the liturgy.

The liturgy of St. James (Malankara *Qurbono*) is a veritable example for the communitarian dimension of the liturgy. “One of the great attractions of the Syro–Malankara rite is that the faithful feel that it is they who are offering the Holy Sacrifice with the Eternal Priest.”<sup>24</sup> The dialogue form of the Holy *Qurbono* deserves a special mention. Moreover Malankara liturgy retains the communitarian character of liturgy by providing ample opportunities to the congregation in the form of responses, songs, etc. The celebration of the sacraments is always encouraged to be held with the maximum participation of the ecclesial community. It is significant to note that on occasions of common worship, Sundays, feast days, etc, the divine praises are recited by the entire congregation together, namely the priest and the faithful.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2.5. Malankara Liturgy as the Source of Theology

When we delve deeper into the early Christian heritage we realize the close relationship that existed between liturgy and theology in the oriental Churches. Liturgy is considered as the source of theology. The expression, “liturgy is the locus of theology” very well manifests the intimate relation between liturgy and theology. Liturgy is regarded as the foundational reality and all the theological developments should be envisioned on this basis.<sup>26</sup> All the fundamentals of faith are included in the liturgy and all the theological disciplines should be the explanation of this fundamental reality<sup>27</sup>. Theology explains the faith of the Church whereas liturgy celebrates the faith. “Among the Fathers it was accepted that liturgy is the homeland for theology.”<sup>28</sup> This is the reason why the eastern theologians prefer to use the term liturgical

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<sup>24</sup> PETER, Mar Ivanios and Reunion Movement, 265

<sup>25</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *Malankara Catholic Church*, 91

<sup>26</sup> KALLARANGATT, *Church as the Meeting Place*, 39

<sup>27</sup> KALLARANGATT, *Church as the Meeting Place*, 39

<sup>28</sup> KALLARANGATT, *Church as the Meeting Place*, 36

theology. It primarily means that theology is firmly rooted in the liturgy.

The age-old adage “*lex orandi, lex credendi*” (The law of prayer establishes the law of belief) is a vital principle in the life of the Malankara Church. Here the law of prayer stands for the faith of the Church and the law of belief stands for theology. It shows that liturgy has a decisive role in articulating the nature and character of theology.<sup>29</sup> The very act of worship is the expression of the faith of the Church. “In the east, theology is expressed in the liturgy; that means, the liturgical texts are real sources of theological synthesis. Theology for them is not a speculative science, shelved in volumes, but the living norm of the practical life of the Church, expressed in the liturgy”<sup>30</sup>. In accordance with this venerable tradition, the liturgical texts of the Malankara Church are pregnant with dogmatic content. The great doctrines on the Holy Trinity, Mother of God, Church, incarnation, redemption, eschatology, etc. are expressed in the liturgical texts itself<sup>31</sup>. In short, the theology in the Malankara Church draws its inspiration and content from the liturgy. In other words, Malankara liturgy constitutes the gold mine of its theology.

### 1.2.6. Malankara Liturgy as the Source of Spirituality

Spirituality may be described as a particular style of God experience<sup>32</sup>. For a Christian, God experience is primarily a Christ experience. It is in Jesus Christ, the ‘God-Man’ that the faithful experience God. Jesus, being Immanuel makes it possible for us to have an experience of God. “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” (Jn 14:9) In short, “the authentic Christian spirituality is experiencing God in Christ in the liturgy of the Church.”<sup>33</sup> The oriental perspective of spirituality is a significant one. In the east, spirituality is understood as a growth in Jesus Christ.<sup>34</sup> “One who

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<sup>29</sup> KALLARANGATT, Church as the Meeting Place, 36

<sup>30</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy*, 76

<sup>31</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 48

<sup>32</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Liturgy Experience*, 35

<sup>33</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Liturgy Experience*, 39

<sup>34</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Liturgy Experience*, 34

is born in the 'image' of Jesus Christ is being continuously transformed to His 'likeness' by the assiduous help of the Holy Spirit. This process of 'divinisation' is called the spirituality."<sup>35</sup>

In the eastern tradition, liturgy and spirituality are inextricably interrelated. "At the core of the oriental spirituality is their liturgy. For they consider liturgy as the most powerful medium to proclaim the divine mysteries and stimulate the God experience."<sup>36</sup> The aim of liturgical celebrations is to lead one to true, personal and intimate relationship with God, which can be characterized as an authentic spiritual life. An active and conscious participation in the mysteries celebrated in the liturgy ensures enlightenment and enrichment in one's spiritual life, the journey of divinisation.

Malankara liturgy serves as an efficacious instrument in bringing about the spiritual growth of a person. "The picturesque presentation of the events of Christ's life, the dialogue form of the Mass, the beautiful prayers coupled with symbolism are a source of spiritual enlightenment for the faithful"<sup>37</sup>. The arrangement of the various ecclesiastical cycles ensures the participation of the faithful in various Christ- events and as a result, a merging of human with the divine is taking place in the Church; in other words, a sharing in God's life is taking place in every day life of the believer, which will be fully realized with the eternal meeting between God and the redeemed man<sup>38</sup>. The liturgical cycle<sup>39</sup> is

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<sup>35</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Liturgy Experience*, 34

<sup>36</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 119

<sup>37</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 53

<sup>38</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 57

<sup>39</sup> The re-enactment of the saving actions of God is experienced by the faithful through the liturgical cycles. Liturgical cycles in the Malankara Catholic Church are constituted into three, namely, the daily cycle, the weekly cycle and the yearly cycle. The day is divided into seven hours. They are *Ramso* (Evening), *Suthāra* (time between evening and night), *Lilio* (Night), *Sapro* (morning), Third hour, Sixth Hour (noon) Ninth Hour. Each liturgical hour has got a particular relation with some mystery of the salvation history. The seven days of the week are celebrated in a particular way with different themes (Monday and Tuesday - Repentance, Wednesday - Mary, Thursday - Apostles and Fathers, Friday - Cross, Saturday - Departed Souls and Sunday - Resurrection). The year is divided into



arranged in such a manner that through various liturgical seasons, the Church grants her members bountiful sharing in the mystery of deification<sup>40</sup>. “A serious study of the Malankara liturgical texts shows that it is full of spiritual meaning and beauty and one can easily reach the height of spiritual perfection by meditating on the mystery of Christ.”<sup>41</sup>

### 1.2.7. Malankara Liturgy is Mystical

Liturgy is a continuous contemplation on the mystery of God. God stands above all categories and human predications. We are baffled by the ineffable, invisible, indescribable and incomprehensible mystery of God. As a result, it is with awesome respect and wonder that one approaches God. One of the characteristic features of the Malankara liturgy is its great sense of sanctity, awe and wonder before the divine mystery<sup>42</sup>. This aspect of the liturgy is very much dominated by the scene of the vision of prophet Isaiah when he saw the Lord on a lofty throne in the temple in Jerusalem, and heard the angels singing ‘holy, holy, holy’ before Him (Isaiah 6:1-9). He was awestruck by the vision yet he did not run away. It is with the same sentiments that one approaches the mystery of God. The mystical nature of the Malankara liturgy leads one to a deep awareness and experience of the divine mystery. Malankara liturgy also lays much stress on the sense of lowliness and unworthiness of human being to approach the pure and perfect God. It leads one to a deep sense of humility and simplicity. In short, Malankara liturgy keeps a wonderful

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seven seasons, which highlight the important events of Jesus Christ. 1. Annunciation (*Subōro*), 2. Nativity and Baptism (*Yaldo-Denho*), 3. Lenten Season (*Saumo Rābbo*), 4. Resurrection (*Qyomto*), 5. Pentecost, 6. Transfiguration and 7. Cross (*Sleebo*). See MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 50-53, MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhavatsaram*, 56-65, MOOLAVEETIL, *Yakkobinte Annaphora*, 39-47

<sup>40</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 50

<sup>41</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 53

<sup>42</sup> The use of veil in between *madbaha* (sanctuary) and *hykala* (nave) and removing the sandals while entering into the Church signify this aspect (Ex 3:5). See THYKOOTTATHIL, *Shimoyile Thiruvachana Sampathu*, 25

balance between the dreadful majesty of God and man's filial trust and hope in Him.<sup>43</sup>

### 1.2.8. Malankara Liturgy is Symbolic

“Liturgy is a mystery, the whole expression of a salvation that embraces the divine and human elements, the finite and the Infinite.”<sup>44</sup> We try to participate in this mystery by means of signs and symbols. Malankara liturgy does not lag behind in using rich symbolism. The sacred rites in the liturgy are pregnant with rich meaning. “Through its symbolic expressiveness, the whole mystery of Christ is enacted in such a way that faithful are enabled to relive this mystery.”<sup>45</sup> The liturgical cycle (yearly, weekly and daily) presents the mystery of Christ in a mystical and symbolic way. The liturgical texts of the Malankara Church are meditations based on biblical themes, presenting the mystery of God in a mystical and symbolic way.<sup>46</sup> The Liturgical hymns are characterized by the free use of typology, word play, paradox, metaphor etc. Great symbolism is also attached to various gestures (prostration, kneeling, standing, facing the east, etc) and things (censor, veil, cross, bell, etc.) used in the liturgical celebration.

### 1.3. Mar Ivanios and the Malankara Liturgy

As Mar Ivanios was born and brought up in a traditional Syrian Orthodox community, which enjoys a liturgy that belongs to the Antiochene tradition and attaches great significance to liturgical life, his whole life was revolving around the liturgy. “The young Geevarghese (Mar Ivanios) showed exceptional interest in going to church and attending the Holy Eucharist.”<sup>47</sup> These words of T. Inchackalody serve as a preface to the great role of liturgy and liturgy-based spirituality in the life of Mar Ivanios. In the forward march of time, his interest in liturgy developed by

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<sup>43</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 123

<sup>44</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *Heritage of Syrian Church*, 124

<sup>45</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 56

<sup>46</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 53

<sup>47</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, .32



leaps and bounds. Mar Ivanios' vocation to priesthood provided him ample opportunities to make an extensive study of the liturgy. "The Jacobite Church in South India, in fact, gives great importance to the liturgical formation of the clerics."<sup>48</sup> During his seminary studies, he gave utmost importance to the study of liturgy, which earned him the title, *Kūdāsa Semmāssan* (the deacon of the sacraments).<sup>49</sup> "Mar Ivanios' ordination to the priesthood added new impetus to his liturgical spirit. He organized a small group of people to go to different parishes, especially on Sundays, and to preach to the faithful the importance of liturgy."<sup>50</sup>

## 2. Liturgy as a Means of Union with God: Mar Ivanios' Vision on Liturgy

We have seen that Mar Ivanios' vision on liturgy was greatly influenced by his theologico-liturgical background. So far, we have been trying to understand the nature and characteristics of the Malankara liturgy, which Mar Ivanios inherited as his legacy. In this part we attempt to understand the vision of Mar Ivanios on liturgy. As we move further, we will also try to spell out the various dimensions of this vision. We will also devote our attention to bring home, the various steps taken by Mar Ivanios in making the liturgy relevant and meaningful.

### 2.1. Ivanios' Notion of Union with God

According to Mar Ivanios everything that is created in and through the Word (Jn1.3) is in search of union with God. The real bliss of the creatures consists in their union with God.<sup>51</sup> This is what St. Paul means when he says "the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now." (Rom 8:22) Since man is the representative of the whole creation, when he reaches God we can rightly assume that in him and through him, all creatures reach

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<sup>48</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life*, 131

<sup>49</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 32

<sup>50</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 132

<sup>51</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 53



God.<sup>52</sup> Mar Ivanios considers union with God as the supreme end of the human person and an authentic service of God is possible only through a loving union with God. He is of the opinion that “those who truly desire to serve God should spend all their life in acquiring union with God and there is nothing more sublime than union with God in this valley of tears.”<sup>53</sup> Union with God is man’s divinisation, so to say, man is made God. That man’s desire to be united with God is natural to him means that, it is God-given. Man cannot achieve this by himself, because he is in bondage and sin.<sup>54</sup> The means devised by God himself to realize man’s quest for union with God is the Word Incarnate, Jesus. The very purpose of the incarnation is to bring about the union of man with God. Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human is the only means to enter into the divinity of God. Jesus Christ is the sacrament of man’s unity with God.<sup>55</sup> In order to achieve this union what we need is to unite our body and spirit with the body and spirit of the Messiah.<sup>56</sup> The two ways proposed by Mar Ivanios to attain this union are the Church and the sacraments.

## 2. 2. Church as the Expression of Union with God

The Church, being the body and sacrament of Christ in the post resurrection (ascension) period, unity with the Church is unity with Christ.<sup>57</sup> The Church is the visible form of the invisible Christ. According to His promise – “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”(Mt 28:20) - Jesus with his resurrected body dwells in us. His body is spread in the world in the form of the Church. Christ’s body, the Church, is a community of love that tastes his love and gets united with him. Now we are united with him by abiding in the Church. Eucharistic communion manifests and confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ.

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<sup>52</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios* - 1, 53

<sup>53</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 57

<sup>54</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios* - 1, 54

<sup>55</sup> VALUPARAMBIL, *Mar Ivanios Prophet of Ecclesial Communion*, 154

<sup>56</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios* - 1, 52-60

<sup>57</sup> VALUPARAMBIL, *Mar Ivanios Prophet of Ecclesial Communion*, 157

### 2.3. Liturgy as a Means of Union with God

Man is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). Christ is the image of God (Col 1:15) or the true archetype according to which human being is created. Jacob of Serug says: "Before the created things, the Father sealed the image of his son, and formed him and showed him how he would shine among earthly beings. The Father looked at the image of his Son and formed Adam."<sup>58</sup> "One who is born in the 'image' of Jesus Christ is being continuously transformed into His 'likeness' by the assiduous help of the Holy Spirit."<sup>59</sup> This process, divinisation, makes man increasingly like Jesus. The fundamental aim of liturgy according to Mar Ivanios, is the divinisation of the human person or union with God. "The disciples of Christ get a living image of Christ in the liturgy. This image gradually penetrates into the depth of their beings and make them more and more like their Master."<sup>60</sup> All the liturgical activities are fundamentally directed to this ultimate goal.

### 2.4. Sacramental life: Experience of Union with God

Liturgy as the public worship of the Church is primarily expressed through the sacraments. Sacraments are the streams through which the salvific graces, Christ earned for mankind by his salvific economies flow and are kept in the treasury of the Church.<sup>61</sup> As we have seen, the ultimate purpose of wo/man is to attain union with God. For this we have to receive God spiritually as well as physically, in appearance and in mystery.<sup>62</sup> Mar Ivanios understands sacraments as the effective means to attain the union with God.<sup>63</sup> Christ unites man with the Church through her sacraments. Sacraments of the Church are the practical and existential ways of living in Christ, that is to say, for remaining in the Church, Christ's body, and thereby in Christ and through him

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<sup>58</sup> BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, 14

<sup>59</sup> PATHIKULANGARA, *Liturgy Experience*, 34

<sup>60</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 134

<sup>61</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Kumpasāram*, 12

<sup>62</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 61

<sup>63</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

God.<sup>64</sup> “Mar Ivanios, being born and brought up in the Malankara liturgical tradition, took special care for the sacramental and liturgical life of his faithful: through his instruction and writings he taught the people the importance of sacraments in Christian life in increasing the faith of the recipient.”<sup>65</sup>

### 2.4.1. Eucharist

As we have seen earlier, the fundamental goal of human being is union with God. Christians achieve the said unity in love practically in the reception of the sacraments of the Church, particularly in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>66</sup> Holy Eucharist is the most important means by which “those who are far and near, living and departed” united in love and grace by means of Christ.<sup>67</sup> The Messiah himself instituted it in order to make us capable of uniting our body and spirit with the body and spirit of God.<sup>68</sup> The Holy Eucharist celebrated in the Church unites the faithful with the Divine Trinity. It enables the faithful for a mystical union with our Lord and through him with the Father.<sup>69</sup> Mar Ivanios calls the Holy Eucharist ‘Immanuel’.<sup>70</sup> It means the Holy Eucharist is the means by which Jesus, the God dwells in us. In the Holy Eucharist, the visible and invisible elements are united to unite us to Christ.<sup>71</sup> Hence, in our reception of the Holy Eucharist we are visibly and invisibly united with Christ. The tangible character of our union with the humanity of Christ is most evident in the Eucharist.<sup>72</sup> Emphasizing the need for active participation in the Eucharist, Mar Ivanios says: “We can offer to God no greater honour than worthily participating in the Holy Sacrifice.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> VALUPARAMBIL, Mar Ivanios Prophet of Ecclesial Communion, 157

<sup>65</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios – Pastor and Prophet*, 219

<sup>66</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 61

<sup>67</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visuddha Qurbāna*, 3

<sup>68</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

<sup>69</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

<sup>70</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visuddha Qurbāna*, 6

<sup>71</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

<sup>72</sup> VALUPARAMBIL, Mar Ivanios, Prophet of Ecclesial Communion, 157

<sup>73</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Rubrics*, 1



The Holy Communion is a unique way of experiencing our union with God. Mar Ivanios regarded the Holy Eucharist as the spiritual food in our journey to heaven. In his book, *Before God* he depicts the "Eucharist as the fountainhead of spiritual life; by worshipping this Eucharistic Lord one could attain merits, which enable one to acquire eternal salvation."<sup>74</sup> Salvation is nothing but the ultimate participation in the life of God. Mar Ivanios earnestly encouraged the faithful to attend the Sunday Holy *Qurbano* and the reception of the Holy Communion with frequency and adequate preparation since it ensures an intimate union with God. He was fully convinced that the daily reception of the Holy Communion is an effective means to attain spiritual growth, our journey towards deification. "He considered the Eucharist the greatest sign of God's love for humanity, which one should accept as a gift and a source of strength in this world of tribulations."<sup>75</sup> His deep conviction with regard to the reception of the Holy Communion can be seen in his book, *Visuddha Qurbana*.

In Apostolic times, daily Communion was prevalent among the faithful. This daily Communion especially during the Lenten season is highly recommended. But at least we should try to prepare ourselves to receive Communion on Sundays and other days of obligation. As you grow in Christian life you should prepare both mentally and spiritually for the reception of the Sacrament in a most worthy manner. By such reception, you can merit the love of God and life in the spirit.<sup>76</sup>

## 2.4.2. Confession

Our fundamental purpose of attaining union with God is often obstructed by our inclination to sin. By purifying ourselves from the stains of sin, we enter into communion with God and our fellow beings. Realizing the value of confession in purifying ourselves and establishing communion with God and fellow beings, Mar Ivanios, even when he was a deacon conducted many

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<sup>74</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 133

<sup>75</sup> As quoted in NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 25

<sup>76</sup> As quoted in NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 43

seminars and study sessions on the necessity and efficacy of the sacrament of confession in Christian life. “When he was ordained he tried to infuse new life into the observance of the sacrament of confession among the people.”<sup>77</sup> In 1932, he published a book, *Visuddha Kumpasāram* on the sacrament of confession. It extensively deals with the various dimensions of confession. It also serves as a guideline for people to examine their conscience.<sup>78</sup> The prayers before and after the confession, which are given in the book, manifest his theological depth and calibre. He used to instruct the priests of their obligations as ministers of the sacrament of confession, as a judge, a spiritual guide, a counsellor and above all a spiritual father.<sup>79</sup> They were asked to impart the knowledge on the necessity and frequency of receiving the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist. “With regard to the sacramental life, especially the sacrament of confession, he insisted that the priests make regular weekly confession.”<sup>80</sup> He himself set an excellent example by making his confession every week.<sup>81</sup>

### 2.4.3. Divine Office

The divine office as an aid to union with God is always held in high respect in the Malankara tradition. Mar Ivanios strictly followed this venerable tradition with great enthusiasm. Mar Ivanios and his fellow monks dedicated their lives to praise the Lord. The “Divine Office which was chanted by the monks in choir was regarded as their pre-eminent duty and occupation.”<sup>82</sup> “Their daily life was comprised of recitation of the Divine Office in community at a fixed time, morning and evening meditations, examination of conscience, etc.”<sup>83</sup> The great regard he had for Divine Office is also evident from the Holy Rule he had set for the members of his congregation; “all brothers must set a high value

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<sup>77</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 21

<sup>78</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 219

<sup>79</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 219

<sup>80</sup> As quoted in NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 219

<sup>81</sup> PANTHOLIL, *Mar Ivanios Ente Smaranayil*, 68

<sup>82</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 43

<sup>83</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 39



on the Divine Office, recite it with attention, piety and recollection, and pronounce the words distinctly with one heart and one voice... The Divine Office shall be recited in choir daily at the appointed time..."<sup>84</sup> The content and importance of the divine office are expressed by Mar Ivanios in the following words: "In our liturgy (meaning Divine Office) we meditate on the fundamental truths of salvation history; we see Christ as the one Whom we worship and address when we rise up and lay down, eat and drink, at work or rest, alone or in company."<sup>85</sup> Mar Ivanios' attitude towards the Divine Office is well reflected in the words of M. Gibbons: "He rose at midnight to chant the Divine Office."<sup>86</sup>

## 2.5. Liturgy as a Means for Spiritual Renewal

Another important dimension of Mar Ivanios' liturgical vision is that he regarded liturgy as an effective means to bring about a spiritual renewal in the Church. After the *Coonan Cross Oath*, the *Puthenkūttukār* passed through various crises. "Its members went wandering in a spiritual desert, while the Church itself became a fertile field for periodical quarrels and divisions."<sup>87</sup> The spiritual apathy of the Church was a great anguish for Mar Ivanios. "The sad plight of Christianity in India, especially the spiritual lethargy that had crept into the Jacobite Church, was a constant anguish to the young Ivanios, then Fr. Panicker."<sup>88</sup> The spiritual upliftment of the community to which he belonged was his main concern. "The love of Christ urged him; the desire of their spiritual upliftment sustained him. In hunger and thirst and sweat, rough sandaled with blistered feet, across miles of burning soil he hastened to his eager listeners."<sup>89</sup>

The most important requirement of every spiritual renewal is the liturgical renewal by rediscovering and restoring full fidelity to

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<sup>84</sup> As quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 134 See also *The Holy Rule*, No. 186

<sup>85</sup> As quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 134

<sup>86</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 32

<sup>87</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 15

<sup>88</sup> PETER, *Mar Ivanios and Reunion Movement*, 262

<sup>89</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 33



its own liturgical traditions, benefiting from their riches and eliminating that which has altered their authenticity in the course of the centuries.<sup>90</sup> As he was well aware of the fact that spiritual life is intimately related to liturgy and the spiritual renewal is possible only through an authentic and meaningful liturgical life of the Church, Mar Ivanios took keen interest in the sphere of liturgical renewal. His earnest desire for a liturgical renaissance among the Jacobites took him, even when he was a deacon, to different parishes where he taught the faithful the meaning and the importance of the liturgy. This creative venture resulted in the renewed interest in the liturgical celebrations and the increase of the attendance of the faithful at the sacred liturgy. "Apathy fled, and faith and worship revived wherever the missionaries has passed."<sup>91</sup> "He promoted liturgy, by encouraging people, both old and young, to attend daily and Sunday Masses and by developing in them a love for the Church."<sup>92</sup>

## 2.6. Liturgy and Priestly life

Since the fundamental goal of the liturgical celebration is to make one experience union with God, the priests as ministers of the liturgical celebration of the Church occupy a significant position. Their fundamental task is to animate people to take part in the paschal mysteries celebrated in the Church. Mar Ivanios was always earnest in reminding the priests of their sacred duty to bear witness to an authentic and meaningful liturgical celebration. According to him, a priest must be a guide and inspirer for a more authentic sacramental and liturgical life. Among the various obligations prescribed to the priests in the parish, the obligations to be responsible for the proper liturgical ceremonies and the administration of the sacraments stand out.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> PANICKER, *Eschatology*, 200

<sup>91</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 34

<sup>92</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 89

<sup>93</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 239

### 2.6.1. Priestly Life and Liturgical Spirituality

Mar Ivanios, through his pastoral letters and instructions exhorted the priests on the central role of liturgical spirituality in the pastoral life. The priests and the religious have the sacred obligation of joining along with the angels in their eternal singing, 'holy', 'holy', holy'. Holy Eucharist and the divine office are the two important means of worshiping God. Mar Ivanios exhorts the priests in the following words: "Offering of the daily Holy Mass is a privilege of the priests. It should be offered with proper preparation and devotion and at least half an hour should be spent before and after the Mass for preparation and thanksgiving."<sup>94</sup> He further says, "I firmly believe, through the Mass and through your special devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God you will try your level best to be in communion with God and get yourselves purified and sanctified."<sup>95</sup>

His instruction to the priests on the need of divine office and the Holy Sacrifice reflects his deep awareness of the sublime need of a liturgical spirituality. "Prayer... So dear priests, try your level best to be holy by a life of sanctity, which makes you fit to celebrate the daily Holy Mass. Try to achieve this end through your prayer life. So I humbly ask all of you to be faithful and fervent in your daily canonical prayers."<sup>96</sup> He advises them to consider the canonical prayers as a preparation and a worthy thanksgiving to the Holy Eucharist.

### 2.6.2. Liturgy and Priestly Formation

Realizing the important role of the priest in the liturgical life of the Church, Mar Ivanios took keen interest in providing the candidates to priesthood, adequate training in the liturgical formation. "As a liturgist he was always on the look out to train the candidates to priesthood in liturgy and liturgical spirituality."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> As quoted in NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 192

<sup>95</sup> As quoted in NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 192

<sup>96</sup> As quoted in NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 228

<sup>97</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 187

He used to take classes on liturgy and liturgical spirituality of the Malankara Church for those students of priesthood who were studying in other seminaries, mainly in the Latin seminaries. “Since he had a vision of his own formation in the liturgical spirituality of the Church, it is logical to think that he tried to form the future priests in line with the liturgical spirituality of the Church.”<sup>98</sup>

## 2.7. Liturgy and Reunion

Mar Ivanios’ extraordinary zeal for reunion is a natural outcome of his vision of union with God. He understands reunion as a spiritual journey towards Christ of which Eucharist is our food. In one of his addresses to the sisters of the Bethany Convent, he says: “Our reunion with the Catholic Church is a spiritual journey towards Christ; so far we were far away from Christ, in the sense that we did not belong to His fold. In our reunion with the true fold, we will be given the Grace to reach Him. In order to make our journey to Christ easier, we have the eternal food, the Eucharist<sup>99</sup>.” It also points to the fact that reunion is not a mere external communion with the Catholic Church; rather it is intimately related to our final destiny, our deification. Further, he realized that a common liturgy would enhance the prospects of the communion endeavours. The preservation of the Antiochene liturgy as a condition for communion with Rome was due to his deep conviction that it would serve as an effective means to effect the communion among the St. Thomas Christians. “Added to his great love for the Antiochene Rite and ecclesiastical discipline of the Malankara Church, which he tried to preserve at any cost, Mar Ivanios was of the opinion that the preservation of the same, would only help forward the cause of re-union among the Jacobites.”<sup>100</sup> With a view to initiate the ecumenical mission, he inspired the faithful to form prayer groups. Such prayer groups

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<sup>98</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 35

<sup>99</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 101

<sup>100</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 157



substantially contributed to the growth of the ecumenical movement among the Christian families.<sup>101</sup>

## 2.8. Liturgical Reformations

As a committed person to bring about spiritual renewal in the Church, Mar Ivanios adopted various measures to materialise his dream. He tried to organise and revitalise the liturgical life of the people. With the revival of the catechism class, the youngsters were made to relish the beautiful hymns and prayers of the liturgy.<sup>102</sup> He organized the choir to lead the congregation in the liturgical celebration.<sup>103</sup> Attempts were made to bring about uniformity in the chanting of the hymns. Efforts were also made to chant the hymns melodiously and harmoniously. He introduced a radical change in the traditional line up of the faithful. With the new system, the women were given the right half of the Church, instead of relegating them to the back rows behind the men.<sup>104</sup> It resulted in a great zest for community singing and community prayers.

### 2.8.1. Vernacularization

Mar Ivanios took all possible measures to make the liturgy lively and attractive. As part of it, he encouraged the translation of the Syriac prayers and hymns into Malayalam.<sup>105</sup> Before the Second Vatican Council, the Eucharistic celebration was held in such dead languages like Syriac, Latin, etc. But Mar Ivanios, far ahead of his time made the translation of the Syriac Eucharistic liturgy into Malayalam and celebrated it in Malayalam.<sup>106</sup> It ensured and enhanced the active participation of the faithful in the liturgical celebrations. For the use of those who converted from Hinduism to Christianity in the South Travancore region, he took active interest in composing certain prayers on the model of Hindu

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<sup>101</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 215

<sup>102</sup> PETER, *Mar Ivanios and Reunion Movement*, 264

<sup>103</sup> PANTHOLIL, *Mar Ivanios Eente Smaranayil*, 32

<sup>104</sup> PANTHOLIL, *Mar Ivanios Ente Smaranayil*, 32

<sup>105</sup> PANTHOLIL, *Mar Ivanios Ente Smaranayil*, 32

<sup>106</sup> MATHEW -THOMAS, *The Indian Churches*, 125

*bhajans*.<sup>107</sup> Accordingly, a Hindu *munshi* was appointed and he composed some prayers for use in the Church.

### 2.8.2. Indigenisation

“The great faith that was given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ through His beloved apostle, St. Thomas is to be spread all throughout our country, that is in a way suitable to India.”<sup>108</sup> These words of Mar Ivanios reflect his earnest desire for the evangelisation of India in an indigenous manner. “India in its religious life,” he wrote, “has an ancient tradition. The Church should not destroy that tradition; on the contrary it must accept from it whatever is good, that is what is not against faith and morals, and Christianize it.”<sup>109</sup> It was for the first time that an organized attempt was made to fuse the Indian culture with Christian faith. He was convinced of the richness of Indian culture and he wanted to incorporate the good elements of that culture into the Christian life. Mar Ivanios appreciated and respected the local customs and practices and incorporated them with the liturgy. He made no substantial alteration in the Nādār Christian custom of burying the dead in their own family property with a Christian burial service.<sup>110</sup> He also took keen interest in maintaining the local customs and traditions with regard to the sacrament of marriage.

## 3. The Significance of the Vision of Mar Ivanios on Liturgy

Our endeavour to understand the vision of Mar Ivanios on liturgy made us realize that for Mar Ivanios liturgy is a means to attain union with God. In this part, we seek to spell out the significance of the vision and its various dimensions. A critical

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<sup>107</sup> PANTHOLIL, *Mar Ivanios Ente Smaranayil*, 32

<sup>108</sup> Pastoral Letter dated 12 November 1946 as quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 137

<sup>109</sup> Pastoral Letter dated 12 November 1946 as quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 137

<sup>110</sup> Pastoral Letter dated 12 November, 1946 as quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 32

evaluation of the liturgical life of the Malankara Catholic Church is also offered with a purpose to show the necessity to devise practical ways and means to realize the vision of Mar Ivanios. Finally, we try to focus the attention on our specific task, as members of the Malankara Catholic Church, to realize this vision in order to achieve an authentic spirituality based on liturgical life.

### 3.1. Mar Ivanios' Contribution to the Malankara Liturgy

Mar Ivanios not only saw to it that the Antiochene liturgy as practised in the Malankara Church is accepted *in toto* in the Catholic Church but saw to it that it is preserved and enriched through a process of healthy evolution. Through his liturgical life and teachings Mar Ivanios gave his own contribution to the Malankara liturgy as it developed in the Malankara Catholic Church. The liturgy became the source of the spiritual revival he initiated in the Malankara Church. The recognition of the liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church in the Universal Church is a source of enrichment for the whole Church.

#### 3.1.1. An Oriental Vision

A thorough exploration into the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios shows that it is in total conformity with the oriental vision of liturgy. In the east, union with God is considered as the ultimate purpose of human life. "God became man so that man may become God."<sup>111</sup> This theological assertion made by some of the eastern fathers clearly depicts the ultimate destiny of the human person. This process of becoming God or union with God is characterized by the term, deification or divinisation. "Sanctification or deification is nothing other than conformation to Christ, the perfect image of God."<sup>112</sup> According to the oriental vision, "to participate in the divine nature by becoming one with Christ, is something mysterious but real and only by the action of the Holy Spirit it is made possible. In practice, this divinization

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<sup>111</sup> BILANIUK, *The Mystery of Theosis*, 338

<sup>112</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *Beauty of the House*, 64



becomes a reality through the participation in the liturgy, while it re-enacts the salvific events.”<sup>113</sup> Mar Ivanios too sought the deification of the human person in and through the liturgy. According to him: “The disciples of Christ get a living image of Christ in the liturgy. This image gradually penetrates into the depth of their beings and make them more and more like their Master.”<sup>114</sup> This conformation or union with Christ is considered as salvation, the ultimate goal of human life. This conformation takes place in and through the liturgy. This is the reason why Mar Ivanios put so much emphasis on the liturgical life of the Church.

### 3.1.2. A Vision based on Rootedness and Openness

Mar Ivanios was very faithful and loyal to his tradition, the Antiochene liturgy. This is very evident from his words and deeds. From his childhood, he was a faithful follower of the Antiochene liturgy. As a deacon, he was very energetic in conducting seminars and study sessions on liturgy.<sup>115</sup> When he became a monk, he considered it his pre-eminent duty to strictly follow the Antiochene tradition of liturgical life by means of divine office, Eucharistic celebration, fasting and abstinence. After his designation to the episcopate, he was all the more eager to impart the liturgical tradition to his faithful by means of pastoral letters and exhortations.<sup>116</sup> His eager desire to retain the Antiochene liturgy at the time of communion with the Catholic Church set an excellent example for his commitment, loyalty and love towards his tradition.<sup>117</sup>

However, Mar Ivanios was not a blind follower of his tradition. While he acknowledged and appreciated the valuable gems of the tradition, he was very open to changes and innovations according to the need of the time. It is very evident

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<sup>113</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *Beauty of the House*, 65

<sup>114</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 134

<sup>115</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 131

<sup>116</sup> Pastoral Letters dated 3 July 1941 and 15 January 1942 exclusively deal with liturgical life, especially the Divine Office.

<sup>117</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 299

from the translation of Syriac prayers into Malayalam,<sup>118</sup> the indigenisation of liturgy such as the composition of prayers on the model of Hindu *bhajans*, appreciation and respect for local customs and traditions, giving woman the right place in the chapel, etc. Though these revolutionary steps were initially confronted with much opposition and challenges, later they were acknowledged and appreciated by the people.<sup>119</sup> These bold and farsighted steps undertaken by Mar Ivanios had the sole purpose of making the liturgical celebrations relevant and effective. As a result, the faithful were able to experience union with God through the liturgical celebrations.

All these are to be evaluated and appreciated against the background of the reformations made by the Second Vatican Council in 1964. It was only with the Second Vatican Council that the ideas like inculturation, vernacularization, etc gained worldwide attention and adherence in the Roman Church. However, Mar Ivanios was well aware of the need of inculturation and Indianisation of the Church and the liturgy much earlier.<sup>120</sup> Mar Ivanios' view on indigenisation is very well expressed in the Holy Rule of the religious congregation (Bethany) he established on 15 August 1919. "The special end of the congregation shall be to imitate... Jesus Christ... through the adaptation of the Indian ways of life."<sup>121</sup> E.R. Hambye, observes: "P.T. Geevarghese, later Mar Ivanios, realized that Christian ideals should be integrated in the Indian milieu fully and without second thoughts."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> It is interesting to note that the publication of the Malayalam *taksa* (Text of the Holy *Qurbono*) was opposed by the bishops as well as the by the laity. Syriac was regarded, as a sacred language while Malayalam was profane. But this opposition gradually died down. The celebration of the Holy *Qurbono* in Malayalam was accepted everywhere (See MATHEW-THOMAS, *The Indian Churches*, 125).

<sup>119</sup> MATHEW-THOMAS, *The Indian Churches*, 125

<sup>120</sup> Pastoral Letter dated 12 November 1946 as quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 138

<sup>121</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No. 2

<sup>122</sup> As quoted in MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 138

### 3.1.3. A Context Sensitive Vision

The context in which Mar Ivanios formed his liturgical vision was a deplorable one<sup>123</sup>. The divisions, dissensions, rifts, lawsuits, etc of the Church deeply wounded his heart<sup>124</sup>. It was this dismal situation of the Church that compelled him to reiterate the essential goal of liturgy, namely, the union with God. It was at a time when the spiritual vigour and vitality of the Church was at its lowest ebb that Mar Ivanios emerged as a reformer and his liturgical vision was capable of providing a direction and meaning to their spiritual life. His vision of liturgy could adequately respond to the wretched situation of the ecclesial and spiritual lives of the people. People were made to know the soul and goal of the liturgy. As a result, spiritual apathy fled and people began to actively participate in the liturgical celebrations.

### 3.1.4. A Mission Oriented Vision

Another important dimension of the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios is that it is fundamentally directed towards mission. The evangelisation of India was a great dream of Mar Ivanios. It was his earnest desire that the entire people of India know Jesus Christ as their saviour.<sup>125</sup> In his pastoral letter dated 12 November 1946, he says; “the great faith that was given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ through His beloved apostle St. Thomas, is to be spread all throughout our country, that is in a way suitable to India.”<sup>126</sup> He was very much pained by the laxity shown by the Indian Church in the evangelisation of India.<sup>127</sup> What inspired Mar Ivanios to take up the cause of mission or evangelisation of India is his deep conviction that all are called to attain the union with God and that nobody should be excluded from the purview of God’s grace. He was fully aware that its realization was possible only through an inculturated Church and liturgy<sup>128</sup>. Mar Ivanios was of the opinion

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<sup>123</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 76

<sup>124</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 27

<sup>125</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 56

<sup>126</sup> Pastoral Letter dated 12 November 1946

<sup>127</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 55

<sup>128</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios -I*, 181



that it is indispensable to remove the foreign character of the Church that in a way impeded the growth of the Church. He valued the need of inculturation and Indianisation of the Church and the liturgy in order to make rapid strides in the ecclesial growth. It is significant to note here that only after the Second Vatican Council that these elements were accorded adequate attention in the Universal Church.

### 3.1.5. An All -Embracing Vision

The vision of Mar Ivanios on liturgy is an all-embracing vision. It touches all the aspects of life and excludes none. It was his conviction that all are created in the image and likeness of God and are marching towards God, seeking union with God.<sup>129</sup> The whole humanity as a community marches towards God. In this march, there is no distinction between male or female, high caste or low caste. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal3:28) It was this vision of communion, which is the core of his liturgical vision, that inspired and guided Mar Ivanios to commit himself to the cause of his fellow brethren, especially those who were on the periphery of the society like the *pulayās* and, *parayās*.<sup>130</sup> He wanted everybody to be united with God. His social service activities were aimed at strengthening the weaker section of the society to equip them for the journey towards God. Mar Ivanios stressed this fact by saying that the fundamental purpose of the *vijāthīya* (gentile) mission is the spiritual enrichment rather than social development<sup>131</sup>.

### 3.2. A Challenging Vision: Our Task.

After having seen the various dimensions of the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios, we concentrate our attention on his and our commitment to liturgy. Hailing from a community that

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<sup>129</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 52

<sup>130</sup> The *Pulayās* and *Parayās* were the low caste people who were subjected to many social discriminations and exploitations.

<sup>131</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 148

vehemently opposed the Latinisation of the native liturgy, Mar Ivanios showed much courage and determination in the preservation of the Antiochene liturgy. His commitment to liturgy was expressed in various ways and spheres. What inspired Mar Ivanios to accept the professorship in Serampore was the guarantee given by Dr. Howells to provide opportunities for the learning of Oriental doctrines and the practice of his own liturgy.<sup>132</sup> He was all the more vigilant in teaching and training those young candidates to priesthood whom he brought from Kerala, in the liturgical spirituality of the Church and keeping them away from the protestant influences.<sup>133</sup> In Serampore they were staying in a rented house and one of its big rooms was set apart as a small chapel for the Holy Eucharist, meditation, and divine office.<sup>134</sup> He took special care in teaching Syriac, the liturgical language to the candidates to priesthood.<sup>135</sup>

Mar Ivanios made no compromise with the dilution of liturgy. It is very evident from the conditions he laid down for the communion with the Catholic Church. In his letter to the Sacred Congregation with regard to the reunion, he specified that it could be taken place only with the recognition and the preservation of the Antiochene rites and rituals.<sup>136</sup> “He desired earnestly to be reconciled with the true Church of Christ; however, he loved his liturgy so much that he did not want to abandon it, but to continue it in the Catholic Church.”<sup>137</sup>

Mar Ivanios was very particular in using the correct liturgical texts. “Translations from Syriac into Malayalam were a perennial source of irritation to him, especially translations of prayers, scriptural passages and phrases in the liturgy proper.”<sup>138</sup> The missionaries of the Church Mission Society made these translations. “Mar Ivanios, a purist for accurate version, could

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<sup>132</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 48-49

<sup>133</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 52

<sup>134</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 52

<sup>135</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 53

<sup>136</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 299

<sup>137</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 136

<sup>138</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 64

never keep silent under their shortcomings.”<sup>139</sup> A great deal of his exhortations and pastoral letters<sup>140</sup> were concerned with liturgy and liturgical life.

### 3.2.1. The Malankara Liturgy Today

So far we have been trying to understand the significance of the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios. On the basis of this, we make an assessment of the present state of the liturgical life of the Malankara Church. Liturgy is the most sublime expression of our faith. It is the source and centre of spirituality. It is true that the Malankara Catholic Church inherits a rich liturgy, namely the Antiochene liturgy. But today the Malankara liturgy is in a state of stagnation and people have become more and more alienated from the liturgical life. A kind of lethargy has crept into the liturgical life of the Church. It is manifested in the laxity in participating in the Holy *Qurbano*, reception of the Holy Communion, aversion to sacramental life, etc. The faithful are not getting ample opportunities to understand the rich symbols of the liturgy. Liturgical celebrations are sometimes relegated to mere cultic observations. There is a growing tendency to do away with the liturgical prayers and accept elements that are alien to the genuine Malankara tradition.<sup>141</sup>

An authentic spirituality and life style emanating from the liturgical life is on the verge of decline. A gradual deterioration of adequate knowledge of the rich liturgical and spiritual heritage and patrimony of the Malankara Catholic Church, her sacramental life, etc, are even more evident today. Lack of adequate knowledge and regard for the uniqueness and characteristic features of Malankara liturgical tradition, result in looking down upon our own tradition, inferiority complex and the attraction towards other liturgical traditions.

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<sup>139</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 64

<sup>140</sup> The Pastoral Letter dated 3 July 1941 is an excellent example for it.

<sup>141</sup> For further details see KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 125–128



Added to this, the Malankara Catholic Church lags behind in developing a sound liturgical theology of her own and make it available to the faithful. “The course on liturgy still remains a mere study of the rubrics.”<sup>142</sup> It is to be admitted that the Malankara Catholic Church has failed to make rapid strides in the field of liturgical study. “Books on our (Malankara) liturgy dealing with biblical, theological, symbolical, and historical explanations are rare and are not easily available.”<sup>143</sup> Often times the tendency is to be content with what the Church has already inherited. Liturgical reforms in the Malankara Church are at snail’s pace. “The liturgical reform envisaged by the (Second Vatican) Council has been reduced into the changed usage of the synonyms of certain words in the Malankara Catholic Church”<sup>144</sup>.

### 3.2.2. Our Response to the Challenge

For a Malankara Catholic, liturgy is the primary and indispensable source of divine life. We have seen that a gradual decline is taking place in the vigour and vitality of the Malankara liturgical life. It challenges us to commit ourselves to revitalize and invigorate the liturgical life of the Malankara Catholic Church and to educate the faithful on the fundamental aim of liturgy. It is of paramount importance because liturgy encompasses all the aspects of her life.

As a liturgy-centred Oriental Church, Malankara Catholic Church is in dire need of devising practical ways to rejuvenate her liturgical life, to protect her own liturgical heritage and make it tangible to the children of the Church.<sup>145</sup> It will enhance the spiritual life of the children of the Malankara Catholic Church. Mar Ivanios used liturgy as an effective antidote to the malice of spiritual aridity caused by lawsuits, dissensions, and rifts of the Jacobite Church. Today similar spiritual droopiness persists in the Malankara Catholic Church, not essentially due to lawsuits or

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<sup>142</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 128

<sup>143</sup> PAZHOOR, *The Diocese of Tiruvalla*, 47

<sup>144</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 129

<sup>145</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 128

dissensions but due to the changed attitudes of the time such as consumerism, materialism, etc. In order to counter the spiritual degeneration and rejuvenate the liturgical life of the Malankara Catholic Church, the following means may be helpful and effective.

### 3.2.2.1. Liturgical Catechesis

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical celebrations, which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.” (SC 14)” Full and active participation in the liturgy is possible only through a catechesis about the liturgy. The indispensability of the catechesis about liturgy is very much emphasized in the General Catechetical Directory.

Catechesis must promote an active, conscious, genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentances, for praying with confidence, for a community spirit, and for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds. All these are necessary for a true liturgical life.<sup>146</sup>

It is to be imparted through catechism. Mar Ivanios considered catechism as an effective means to impart the knowledge of the liturgy and the liturgical spirituality of the Malankara Catholic Church.<sup>147</sup> He took an active interest in reviving the catechism class and as a result the younger generations were made to relish the beautiful hymns and prayers of the liturgy.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> GCD 25

<sup>147</sup> The Pastoral Letters dated 6 January 1942 and 29 November 1943 extensively deal with the role of

Catechism in Christian life and propose ways to make it effective.

<sup>148</sup> PETER, Mar Ivanios and Reunion Movement, 264

### 3.2.2.2. The Role of the Pastors

The pastors have a sacred duty to ensure that the faithful are fully aware of what they are doing in the liturgical celebration and actively engage in the rite and are enriched by it. (SC 11) “Therefore, in all their apostolic activity, pastors of souls should energetically set about achieving it through the requisite pedagogy.” (SC 14) “Yet it would be futile to entertain any hope of realizing this unless pastors of souls, in the first place, themselves become fully imbued with the spirit and power of liturgy and capable of giving instruction about it.” (SC 14) The pastors have to make serious efforts to make the liturgical celebrations experiential, meaningful and relevant to the people. “With zeal and patience pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful and also their active participation, both internal and external” (SC 19) not only by word but also by example. Adequate attention has to be given in the formation of the priests to equip them to lead the community of faithful in the liturgical spirituality. For this Mar Ivanios is a perfect model for us. He was always on the look out to train the candidates for priesthood in liturgy and liturgical spirituality.<sup>149</sup>

### 3.2.2.3. The Development of a Liturgical Theology

As members of the Malankara Catholic Church, we have an important duty to contribute to the full comprehension and progress of the liturgical heritage of our Church. The words of Alexander Schmemmann warn us: “The absence of development would be the sign of fatal sclerosis.”<sup>150</sup> To accelerate the ecclesial growth of the Malankara Catholic Church, we have to make an organized move to study the Malankara Liturgy and its theology in its profundity. It should also be made available to the laity. “Though we are fortunate enough to possess a “liturgy that is one of the most beautiful in Christendom” and rich in tradition and spiritual patrimony, it is to be admitted that we have not yet made a sincere effort either to make a deep study into all its treasures or

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<sup>149</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 187

<sup>150</sup> SCHMEMMANN, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 16



made others to relish them.”<sup>151</sup> Our liturgy must be an expression of our faith and life and at the same time, our faith and life should draw their inspiration and energy from the liturgy. The specific problems of the contemporary life are to be addressed in the liturgy. Then only will liturgy be relevant and meaningful.

## Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to understand the liturgical vision of Mar Ivanios and its significance in the contemporary life of the Malankara Catholic Church. Our journey through the various avenues of the Malankara liturgy has revealed that it encompasses all the aspects of our life here and now and of future. Mar Ivanios who was born and brought up in the rich liturgical tradition of the Malankara Church was greatly influenced by it. In fact, his Malankara liturgical background served as a foundation to formulate his liturgical vision. We also made an attempt to understand briefly some of the characteristic features of the Malankara liturgy and its intimate relation with spirituality, ecclesial life, theology, etc.

After having seen the liturgical background of Mar Ivanios, our concern was to understand the vision of Mar Ivanios on liturgy and its unique characteristics. His vision, as we have seen, is in conformity with the oriental vision of liturgy. He considers liturgy as a unique way to realize our ultimate destiny, our union with God. Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate is the way for the union with God. This union in practice is achieved in and through the Church and her sacraments. As he was well convinced of the supreme role of the liturgy in the life of the faithful, he adopted all possible measures such as vernacularisation, indigenisation, etc to make liturgy relevant and meaningful. It was his vision of union that compelled Mar Ivanios, the greatest ecumenist to see and search for further ways to strengthen the unity of the many good aspects of Indian culture and Christianity.

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<sup>151</sup> PHILIPOSE, Archdiocese of Trivandrum, 45

Our analysis, we have proved that Mar Ivanios' vision on liturgy is relevant and meaningful. It is founded on the oriental vision of liturgy. In the east, the focal point of the liturgy is the union with God or deification. Mar Ivanios was very loyal to his liturgical tradition and at the same time, he was not a traditionalist. His vision was an all-embracing one, which was responsive to the specific contexts of his time. Mar Ivanios' extraordinary zeal for liturgical reformation in the Church is the result of his liturgical vision. Those reforms such as vernacularization, indigenisation, etc were aimed at helping people to realize their ultimate destiny. We have also drawn our attention to the present state of the liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church in order to show the necessity to rediscover the vision of Mar Ivanios to bring about a spiritual regeneration in the Church. We have also proposed some measures by which the vision of Mar Ivanios may be inculcated and realized.

Mar Ivanios poses a challenge before us to commit ourselves for the revival of the liturgical spirituality of the Malankara Catholic Church and to take conscious efforts to educate the faithful of the fundamental goal of liturgy and to ensure their active and lively participation in the liturgical celebrations in order to experience our ultimate goal, the union with God.



# Mary in the Vision of Mar Ivanios

Dayanand Kanangiriyil OIC

## 0. Introduction

Mariology is a branch of theology in which we discuss the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the mystery of salvation. She has no individual prominence of her own, except in relation to Christ. In the Church, she is always known as the Mother of God. The Blessed Virgin Mary holds a unique place in Oriental theology as she had played a distinct role in the incarnation and the redemptive act of our Lord Jesus Christ. Her status in theology is related to Jesus Christ.

This article is a humble attempt to bring out the Mariological vision of Mar Ivanios – a vision which is deeply rooted in the Oriental tradition where the Blessed Virgin Mary is known in different titles like Mother of God, Ever Virgin, Second Heaven, Second Eve, etc. Before we start analysing these terms from an Ivanian point of view we wish to deal with his particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which inspired him to give Mary a place of honour.

Mar Ivanios owed his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary to his parents. His parents, especially his mother Anna, were staunch devotees of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Being a true devotee of our Lady, Anna prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary for a child and it is



believed that the birth of Mar Ivanios was the effect of special grace of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>1</sup> Even the vocation of Mar Ivanios is considered as the gift of the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to L. Moolaveetil, Mar Ivanios sought the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary to remove the impediments to his vocation, especially the objection of his father who wished to see his son as a military officer.

The young Gheevarghese had a strong inclination to the ecclesiastical state and as he grew up, he expressed his desire to his parents. His mother and other Kith and Kin encouraged Gheevarghese, but his father threw cold water on his ardent desire because Thomas Panickar wanted to see his son as a military officer. However, undeterred by the discouragement shown by his father, Gheevarghese spent hours daily in prayers, especially to the Blessed Virgin Mary and in return, his persistence was rewarded by the necessary grace.<sup>2</sup>

Young Geevarghese's great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary urged him to make a vow of perpetual virginity when he was young. According to V. Karippayil, "Devotion to our Blessed Lady was among the notable traits in the religious character of young Geevarghese; and when sufficiently grown up he solemnly bound himself to a life of virginity."<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that all the major events in his life happened on the feast days of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For example, he received the diaconate on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Blessed Virgin Mary;<sup>4</sup> his priestly ordination was on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary;<sup>5</sup> and he died on the Feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel.<sup>6</sup>

Mar Ivanios' devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is very well expressed in one of his prayers written in Syriac. The prayer glorifies the Holy Mary by addressing her various titles. Margaret

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<sup>1</sup> INCHAKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 25

<sup>2</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 99

<sup>3</sup> KARIPPAYIL, *The Reunion Movement in India*, 54

<sup>4</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 25

<sup>5</sup> KARIPAYIL, *The Reunion Movement*, 54

<sup>6</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 126

Gibbons translated this prayer into English in her book *Mar Ivanios*.

“O Cloud that rained forth, The Dew of Life, Maid through whose face the sun shines, Who stands out among the generations of the earth, And prevents darkness encompassing it. Central diamond set in the crown of the Lord of Heaven, Who transmits the light of her Son to the four corners of the Universe, Door unbuilt by hands, uncut by tools, closed forever, Through whom the King of Glory entered once, Ship that carried to us riches from the treasury of the Father, All-pure, ever seaworthy vessel piloted by the Prince of Peace, Creeper plant that climbed to the zenith of the mountains, And budded forth the fruit of life – the Son of God. Mother in whose lap the sad find comfort, the sinners hope, and the saints ecstasy.

In Chorus: Pray for us  
 Mary, Mary the Holy  
 Mary the Immaculate,  
 Mary the Ever Virgin,  
 Mary the Eve of Redemption,  
 Mary the Mother of God,  
 MARY THE SECOND HEAVEN  
 Mary my Mother, Alleluia!”<sup>7</sup>

The titles he used here are purely Oriental. In order to understand the Mariology of Mar Ivanios we have to elaborate these titles. This prayer is the key to an understanding of Mar Ivanian Mariology. In order to study the Mariology of Mar Ivanios a thorough study of Oriental tradition in this regard is needed because his vision on Mary is based on it.

## 1. Mary in the Oriental Tradition

The Blessed Virgin Mary has a special place in the theology and liturgy of the Oriental Churches. In Oriental theology,

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<sup>7</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 127-128

Mariology is intrinsically and inextricably related to Christology, because Mary is the Mother of the Son of God. The Blessed Virgin Mary is well known in the Oriental theology through her appellations like Mother of God, Ever Virgin, Second Heaven, Second Eve, etc. These appellations are the supreme expressions of Oriental Mariology. In order to understand the Mariology of Mar Ivanios an understanding of the Mariology of the Oriental tradition is very important. Here I deal with the traditional understanding of the glorious titles of Mary, its scriptural basis and its proclamation in the Malankara Liturgy.

### 1.1. Mary, The Mother of God

The Blessed Virgin Mary has a special place in the theology and liturgy of the Oriental Churches<sup>8</sup>. The title ‘Mother of God’ is the most endearing and glorious of all titles in the Oriental theology. The early fathers of the Church used the Greek expression *theotokos* to denote her divine motherhood. The expression *theotokos* means the one who brings forth God. In Malayalam, we have the expressions like *daivajanani*, *daiva prasavathri*, *daiva māthāvu*, *daiva vāhini* etc. to denote her Divine Motherhood. The Syriac word to denote the Divine Motherhood is “*yoldās ālōho*”, which means ‘God bearer’.<sup>9</sup>

According to the teaching of the Church, Jesus Christ has two natures, the human and divine nature and these two are united in one divine person. Just like our mothers, Mary transmitted human nature to Jesus Christ. Into this human nature of Jesus, his divine personality was blended. Church Fathers of the early centuries addresses the Blessed Virgin Mary ‘Mother of God’ in their writings and points to the fact that she is not *christotokos* but *theotokos* or *yoldās ālōho*. St. Ephraem the Syrian clearly states that it is the Word of the Lord that came forth from the Mother Mary. In other words, the child she conceived and gave birth to is the Son of God. “The Word of the Lord descended from his

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<sup>8</sup> For a synopsis of the history of the usage, see PUTHUPARAMPIL, *The Mariological Thought*, 14

<sup>9</sup> See PUTHUPARAMPIL, *The Mariological Thought*, 14



throne; he came to a young woman and dwelt in her. She conceived him and gave birth to him. Great is the mystery of the most pure Virgin: it goes beyond all praise.”<sup>10</sup> According to St. Ephraem, Holy Mary praises the Son of God who became her son. “O Son of the Most High who have come and resided in me so that I have become Your mother. As I bore You – Your second birth – so too have You given birth to me a second time: You have put on Your mother’s robe – Your body, whereas I have put on Your glory.”<sup>11</sup> From this praise of Mary it is clear that her son is the Son of the Most High.

St. John Chrysostom, an early Church Father, greets the Blessed Virgin as Mother of God. “We greet you Mary, Mother of God, venerable treasure of the whole world, inextinguishable lamp, crown of virginity, sceptre of orthodoxy, indestructible temple.... Mother and virgin...”<sup>12</sup> In an anonymous hymn on Mary, she is praised as the Mother of her Lord. “As she carried the Child in her lap her soul was filled with wonder: proud that He was her son, but knowing well that He was her Lord. She carried him as both son and Lord.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore it has been the Christian tradition to call her the Mother of God. “Mary must be called the Mother of God even if she only gave Jesus his humanity and not his divinity, because in him humanity and divinity form only one person.”<sup>14</sup> Even though the Blessed Virgin Mary gives only his human nature she is not the mother of that human nature only. She is the mother of the whole person Jesus Christ who is having divine and human natures.

The General Council of Ephesus held in AD 431 defined the Divine Motherhood of Mary. The aspect of *theotokos* was debated among Church Fathers in the third and fourth centuries and finally the Council of Ephesus accepted the concept of Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of God and rejected the concept of *christotokos* of

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<sup>10</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 105

<sup>11</sup> BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 23

<sup>12</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 273

<sup>13</sup> BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 39

<sup>14</sup> CANTALAMESSA, *Mary Mirror of the Church*, 59-60

Nestorius. Cyril of Alexandria justifies the title *theotokos* in his letter to Nestorius.

... Thus the holy fathers have unhesitatingly called the holy Virgin “Mother of God” (*Theotokos*). This does not mean that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word united to himself, according to the hypostasis (*kath’hupostasin*), was born from her, the Word was born according to the flesh. (ND 703)

This Council clearly stated that Mary is the *theotokos* and rejected the Nestorian teaching that Mary is only *christotokos* not *theotokos*.

## 1.2. Mary, The Ever Virgin

God chose the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fulfilment of his plan for the salvation of mankind. He blessed her and bestowed his grace on her to become the Mother of his Son. The objective was to redeem mankind from sin and consequent death through the sacrifice of the Son of God, incarnated in her. The Church believes that God the Father prepared Holy Mary as ever virgin, pure and spotless for the incarnation. From the second century onwards the notion of virginal conception is prevalent in the Christian centres. By virgin birth, the early Christians meant that the Virgin Mary miraculously gave birth to Jesus, as it did not destroy her virginity. Through this special call and the grace of God, she remained virgin even after Jesus’ birth. In AD 649, the Church solemnly proclaimed that Mary was “ever virgin” – before, during and after the birth of Christ (ND 703).

Virginity is not merely physical chastity but it is a physical and mental attitude according to the Oriental tradition. God prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary spotless for his incarnation. Almost all the Eastern Church Fathers make a special note to use the adjectives ‘Holy’ and ‘Blessed’ when they address Mary the Mother of God. She is the Holy and the Blessed Virgin because ‘the Holy one’, ‘the PURE’ came and dwelt in her. By calling her

‘Holy Virgin’ what Oriental Churches mean is that she is all pure and spotless in her body and soul and it does not mean merely her physical virginity.

According to Ephraem the Syrian, “Mary is a clear fountain with no troubled waters.”<sup>15</sup> By calling her ‘clear fountain’ Ephraem is praising her as pure Mother of God. According to him, her position as Mother of God itself demanded purity of heart and body. There cannot be any impurity in the Mother of God. Again he praises her as the immaculate sanctuary of the Lord God. “You are the immaculate sanctuary in whom the God king of time rested.”<sup>16</sup> St. Ephraem again adds that the Blessed Virgin Mary possesses all the virtues like purity of heart and holiness of body. “Holy in body, simply beautiful in soul, pure in spirit, sincere in intelligence, perfect in senses, pure of heart, and loyal, she possesses all the virtues.”<sup>17</sup> All these qualities indicate the purity and spotlessness of the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to St. John Chrysostom, “She is both virgin and mother... Behold now, the universe rejoices. Let us tremble and worship the undivided Trinity. Let us praise the ever-virgin Mary.”<sup>18</sup> The tradition also very well brings out this idea of Ever Virginity. An anonymous hymn on Mary in Oriental tradition reads like this, “Holy is her body, resplendent her soul, pure her mind, her understanding most luminous; her thought is most perfect, chaste, temperate, pure, well proved, and full of beauty.”<sup>19</sup> In short, the title “Ever Virgin” is more than the physical conditions. It denotes not only that she conceived Christ in virginity and continued in it but also she was devoid of all forms of sin in mind, heart and senses.

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<sup>15</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 105

<sup>16</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 105

<sup>17</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 110

<sup>18</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 273-274

<sup>19</sup> BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 33



### 1.3 Mary, the Second Heaven

It is the Oriental tradition that called the Blessed Virgin Mary 'Second Heaven' because God came and dwelt in her<sup>20</sup>. God normally dwells in the heaven and now He came and dwelt in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore, she is the second dwelling place of God. First of all the Scripture makes it clear that God came down and dwelt in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>21</sup> "And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." (Lk 1:31-32) God chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to take part in His plan for the salvation of mankind and by his grace she became the Mother of God. God prepared her as spotless because God cannot live in an impure place. Mary's womb contained the Son of God, whom the heaven could not contain.<sup>22</sup>

The Church Fathers praises the Blessed Virgin Mary as the dwelling place of God in their writings. In one of his hymns on the Nativity of Mary, St. Ephraem praises the Holy Virgin Mary like this, "Blessed is she, in whose heart and mind You are: she is a royal palace, because of You, O Royal Son. She is the Sanctuary for You, the High Priest. She knows no worries or cares of home, or husband."<sup>23</sup> In bull *Ineffabilis deus*, Pope Pius IX teaches us that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the dwelling place of God and more holy than Cherubim and Seraphim and she is all pure, all stainless. When he says she is the dwelling place it is clear that she is the second dwelling place i.e. Second Heaven.

They have frequently addressed the Mother of God as *immaculate*, as immaculate in every respect; *innocent*, and verily most innocent; *spotless*, and entirely spotless; holy and removed from every stain of sin; *all pure*, *all*

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<sup>20</sup> For a detailed exposition of this symbolic expression according to the thoughts of Jacob of Serugh, see PUTHUPARAMPIL, *The Mariological Thought*, 36-46.

<sup>21</sup> PUTHUPARAMPIL, *The Mariological Thought*, 36

<sup>22</sup> PUTHUPARAMPIL, *The Mariological Thought*, 36-38

<sup>23</sup> BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 25

*stainless*, the very model of purity and innocence; more *beautiful* than beauty, more *lovely* than loveliness, more *holy* than holiness, singularly holy and most pure in soul and body; the one who surpassed all integrity and virginity; the only one who has become the dwelling place of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit. God alone excepted, Mary is more excellent than all, and by nature fair and beautiful, and more holy than even the Cherubim and Seraphim. To praise her all the tongues of heaven and earth do not suffice.<sup>24</sup>

St. Ephraem the Syrian also points to the fact that the Holy Mary is the dwelling place of God. "The Word of the Lord descended from his throne; he came to a young woman and dwelt in her."<sup>25</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria praises her as the temple of God. "Hail Mary, the Temple in which God is received, or rather holy Temple, as the prophet David exclaimed, *Holy is your temple, admirable in goodness* (Ps 65:4)."<sup>26</sup> Again, he says that the Blessed Virgin Mary received the omnipotent God, whom in no place can be contained, in her womb.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, according to Church tradition Mary is the Second Heaven because God came down and dwelt in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

#### 1.4 Mary, The Second Eve

From the early centuries onwards the idea about Mary was that she was the "New Eve" in association with Christ the "New Adam". Ancient Christian writers who speak about Christ, as the New Adam, addressed the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Second Eve.<sup>28</sup> They compare her obedience to the disobedience of the Eve of Garden of Eden and put forward the Blessed Virgin Mary as the New Eve or Second Eve who brought eternal life to humanity.

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<sup>24</sup> WILLIAM, *Papal Documents on Mary*, 22

<sup>25</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 105

<sup>26</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 429

<sup>27</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 429

<sup>28</sup> This parallelism is founded on the Bible. See among other references see Gen 3, especially 3:15 and 1Cor 15:22.

The Eve-Mary typology is one of the most important typology in the Oriental tradition. Since the beginning of the second century many theologians asserted the role of the Virgin Mary in God's design of the salvation of humankind. While developing this role of Mary they made a comparison between Eve of the Garden of Eden and Virgin Mary of Nazareth. Eve is considered as the proto-type who foreshadowed the arrival of Virgin Mary. "In the field of the theology it emerged as *Eva Ave* doctrine."<sup>29</sup> The Church Fathers like, Justin the Martyr, Ephraem the Syrian, Irenaeus, etc. call the Blessed Virgin Mary as Second Eve. According to St. Justin the Martyr, like Eve of the Garden of Eden who had brought death through her disobedience, Mary, brought us life through her obedience. "For, Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings."<sup>30</sup> St. Ephraem one of the most important Church Fathers of the East says in one of his hymns on the Nativity of Mary: "In her virginity, Eve put on leaves of shame, but Your mother has put on, in her virginity, a robe of glory that encompasses all, while to Him who covers all she gives a body as a tiny garment."<sup>31</sup> St. Ephraem depicts Eve and Mary as the world's two eyes. According to him, Eve is the left eye, which was corrupted through the fall and the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the right eye who allowed Christ to dwell in her womb.<sup>32</sup> In a hymn on Mary in the Oriental tradition, she is depicted as the one who raised the bowed head of Eve. "In Mary is Eve's bowed head raised up again, for she has carried the Child who seized hold of the adder. Those fig leaves of shame have been swallowed up on glory!"<sup>33</sup> According to St. Ephraem, the Blessed Virgin Mary pays the dues of Eve. "Eve came to be a prisoner to sin, but the debt passed on to Mary, so that the daughter might pay the dues of the mother and wipe off the sentence which her

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<sup>29</sup> DANIEL, *Blessed Virgin Mariam*, 29

<sup>30</sup> JURGENS, *The Faith of the Early Fathers - I*, 62

<sup>31</sup> BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 25

<sup>32</sup> BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 31

<sup>33</sup> BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 36



offspring had transmitted to all generations.”<sup>34</sup> He again clearly states that Mary and her royal son brought back humanity from the trap of the serpent in which Adam fell.<sup>35</sup>

The Second Vatican Council teaches us that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the New Eve. “Through her faith and obedience she gave birth on earth to the very Son of the Father, not through the knowledge of man but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, in the manner of a new Eve who placed her faith, not in the serpent of old but in God’s messenger without wavering in doubt.” (LG 63) This doctrine compares and evaluates the roles played by both Eve, the first woman in the Garden of Eden and the virgin as the second Eve. In Eden, Eve disobeyed the commandments of God and through her disobedience death encompassed this world and human beings lost the image of God. In contrast, through Virgin Mary’s obedience to the will of God, through her consent and co-operation, God incarnated in this world and made possible the salvation of humanity. Virgin Mary corrected Eve’s disobedience and became the Second Eve.

### 1.5. Mary in the Scripture

The titles “Mother of God” and “Ever Virgin” are not explicitly found in the Holy Scripture. But there are so many passages, which implicitly state that Jesus Christ is true God and Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ. The implied meaning of these passages in the scripture is that the Blessed Virgin Mary is Mother of God and Ever Virgin. She is first mentioned in the Bible not by name but as Mother of God who gives Jesus his earthly life. We also read in the Holy Scripture expressions like ‘Mother of Jesus’ ‘Mother of Christ’ all of which show that Mary is the Mother of God.

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<sup>34</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 105

<sup>35</sup> RUSSELL, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*, 105

### 1.5.1. Mary in the Old Testament

There are so many ‘types’<sup>36</sup> of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Old Testament.<sup>37</sup> Typology can refer either to the re-employment of traditions or to the fulfilment of prophecy. The first reference to the implied Divine Motherhood is seen in the prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah prophesies that Immanuel, God with us, will come from a young woman. “Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Im-manu-el.” (Is 7:14) “The prophet was referring to the birth of a child taking place some seven hundred years before Jesus’ time, a child whose coming into the world was a sign of the continuance of the royal Davidic line.”<sup>38</sup> It is clear from universal Christian Tradition and the teachings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church that the prophecy of Isaiah applies to Christ and to Mary.

In the Oriental tradition, we can see the comparison between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the “burning bush” in the Old Testament, which was burning but not consumed. “There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.” (Ex. 3:2) According to the tradition, in the same manner even though the Son of God came forth from Mary’s womb he did not destroy her virginity. There is fire but it does not consume; likewise Mary

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<sup>36</sup> Type is “a concrete representation or personification of another reality (the anti-type). There must be a real relationship that links the two and provides an objective foundation for representation. There must be a design (God’s master plan), which is realised in both type and antitype. Finally, the type is a moral example but also actually shares in the reality which it represents.” TAMBASCO, *What are they saying about Mary?*, 41

<sup>37</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to enter into an elaborate discussion on how the early Fathers of the Church reinterpreted some of the Old Testament symbols and were employed describe the mystery of Mary. Jacob of Serugh employs the following Old Testament symbols. “They are: “ark of the covenant”, “second heaven”, “shining castle”, “pure temple”, “celestial chariot”, “new well”, “tabernacle”, and the “cloud of Mount Sinai.” (PUTHUPARAMPIL, *The Mariological Thought*, 85) In the background of the homilies of Jacob of Serugh, the author further elaborates these symbols in the work referred above from pages 22-81. We limit our study to the ‘types’ employed by Mar Ivanios in his devotion to Mary.

<sup>38</sup> BROWN, *The Virginal Conception*, 16

is mother but not without her virginity. Another reference is in the vision of Ezekiel's "closed gate." "The LORD said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut." (Ez.44:2) The gate shall remain shut; nobody other than God shall enter it – it symbolises the ever-virgin Mary who had given birth to her only Son, the Son of God. Moreover, it foretells us that she will remain virgin after the birth of the Son of God, because it was God's abode. The first-born was her only son and sole fruit of her womb. Thus, the analogy clearly refers to Mary's perpetual virginity and to the fact that her son is Son of God.

### 1.5.2. Mary in the New Testament

The New Testament is very rich in its reference to the Virgin Mary. Mary who was present in the Old Testament as "type" or "symbol" or "imagery" emerges as the "virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David." (Lk 1:27) Virginity before and at the conception of Jesus is clear from the words of St. Luke (1:26-27). The Scripture tells us that the angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin. Again, when Mary heard from the angel that she was chosen to be the Mother of the incarnate Word she asked, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (Lk.1:33) It is very clear in the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived Jesus without losing her virginity. In Lk 1:35 we read, "The angel said to her: The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God." Again in Mt 1:18 we read, "Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together she was found to be with the child from the Holy Spirit." In explaining the unique miracle of the virgin birth St. Mathew refers to the famous prophecy of Isaiah in Mt 1:22-23.

It was Mary's relative Elizabeth, who had originally ascribed the title, Mother of God, to the Blessed Virgin Mary. When Mary went to visit Elizabeth the latter exclaimed and said, "And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to



me.” (Lk 1:43) Here the ‘Lord’ means God. When Joseph planned to dismiss Mary because “before they lived together she was found to be with the child” (Mt 1:18) the angel revealed to Joseph Mary’s condition. “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” (Mt 1:20b) From this statement of the angel, it is clear that the child is not born from human intervention but from God. New Testament clearly states that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Mary is the mother of Jesus. In Jn 1:14 we read that “the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” We read in Gal.4:4: “But when the fullness of time had come, God send his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” All these passages show that Jesus is the Son of God.

The following passages show that Mary is the Mother of Jesus. In Jn 2:1 we read, “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. In Jn 19:25 we read: “... Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister...” Again in Acts Mary is referred to as the Mother of Jesus. “... All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.” (Acts.1:14) If Jesus, who comes from a woman, is the Son of God then that woman must be the mother of that divine son, consequently she is the Mother of God.

## **1.6. Mary in the Malankara Liturgy**

The study of Mariology and Marian spirituality of the Malankara Church entails the study of its liturgy, the chief source for any theological studies. The unique position of Mary is highlighted in the liturgy of the Church. Mary, the virgin mother of God occupies a special place in the consciousness of the Malankara Church. The Antiochene liturgy, the chief source of the Malankara liturgy, is very rich in its devotional poetry on Mary.

The Malankara Eucharistic celebration or the Holy Qurbono is a liturgical and sacramental commemoration of the salvation

history. In the salvation history, Mary has a prominent part as the one who closely co-operates with the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. She is described as the chosen Mother of God, Co-operator in the work of salvation, etc. in the Eucharistic celebration.

In the daily prayers and other liturgical texts of the Malankara Church, we see a number of metaphors and titles like “Mother of God,” “Ever Virgin,” “Second Heaven,” and “Second Eve,” which symbolise Mary’s unique place in the economy of salvation. The sixth hour in the divine office and the first vigil of every night prayers, except on Friday, is entirely dedicated to the veneration of Mary. In every *kōlo* of evening and morning prayers, one hymn with two stanzas mentions Virgin Mary. The first *kauma* of every *lilio*<sup>39</sup> prayer in both *shubaho* and *menaolam* is entirely in honour of Mary, except on Fridays. A lot of images of Mary are portrayed here in these prayers. For example in the first watch of the night vigil on Thursday the Ark of the Covenant, the New Jar with salt, which purified the waters of Jericho, Second Eve, etc, signifies her.

### 1.6.1. Mary, the Mother of God

The Blessed Virgin Mary is described as the chosen Mother of God and Co-operator in the work of salvation in the Malankara liturgy. In the offertory prayers of the Eucharist that is offered in honour of Mary, the celebrant prays for the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God.<sup>40</sup> The public service of the Holy Qurbono begin by recalling the memory of Mary, the Mother of God: “May Mary who bore you and John who baptised you be intercessors on our behalf, have mercy on us.”<sup>41</sup> In the beginning of the public worship of the Malankara Eucharistic liturgy, what is remembered is the incarnation. Since Mary is the Mother of God, it is right to remember her in the beginning of the Eucharist. The Gospel blessing also affirms the Divine motherhood of Mary.<sup>42</sup> In the

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<sup>39</sup> Night Prayers

<sup>40</sup> *The Order of the Holy Qurbono*, 9-10

<sup>41</sup> *The Order of the Holy Qurbono*, 14

<sup>42</sup> *The Order of the Holy Qurbono*, 16

*thubden*,<sup>43</sup> the fourth canon is of the Mother of God, where Mary, the holy, glorious, and ever-blessed virgin Mother of God, is commemorated.<sup>44</sup> The *kukilion* of Mary has been given the first place, which is followed by *kukilions* of the saints and the dead. This represents the eschatological family of which Mary is the mother. Thus, Mary is commemorated as the Mother of God at the beginning and is mother of Eschatological family, the Church, at the end.

In the *shimo*<sup>45</sup> and other liturgical texts of the Malankara Church, we see a number of metaphors and titles. In the first watch of the night vigil on Monday, the Blessed Virgin Mary is depicted as the Mother of God. "How to call you, I know not, O Daughter of David. If I call you virgin, I see a son who sucks at your breast. If I call you mother, your virginity remains. Therefore I will call you Virgin Mother of God."<sup>46</sup> Another prayer commemorates Mary as Mother of God can be seen again in the first watch of Monday night vigil. "Daughter of the poor and Mother of the Son of God, you gave wealth to the world that it might live from it. Ship loaded with the blessings and the treasures of the house of the Father, you came and poured out your wealth on our barren earth."<sup>47</sup> In the evening prayer of Wednesday we pray like this: "Blessed are you, pride of humanity. Blessed are you who became Mother of God. Like a sweet perfume breathes on the air, your memory, O Mary, pervades our prayer."<sup>48</sup> From these liturgical hymns, the tradition of calling her Mother of God is clear. Even though Arianism questioned the divine motherhood of Mary, many of the Church Fathers and people of the early centuries praised her divine motherhood through their liturgical prayers.

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<sup>43</sup> Intercessory Prayers

<sup>44</sup> *The Order of the Holy Qurbano*, 33

<sup>45</sup> The book of the divine office of the West Syrian tradition

<sup>46</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 53

<sup>47</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 54

<sup>48</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 101



### 1.6.2. Mary, The Ever Virgin

The Malankara liturgy is rich in its mariological themes. In Eucharistic celebration, we remember the virgin motherhood of Mary by using the metaphor of *burning bush* of the Old Testament in the song during the preparatory service. The burning bush in the Old Testament is one of the most important metaphors in the Malankara Liturgy, which points to Mary's eternal virginity. "As the fire enflamed the bush yet did not it burn, so did God come down and dwelt in the virgin's womb; He incarnate was of her loosing not the virgin's seal."<sup>49</sup> Even though there was fire on the bush, it did not consume the bush likewise even though Holy Mary is mother she did not loose her virginity.<sup>50</sup>

In the blessing before the reading of the Gospel also, the holiness and virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is affirmed by addressing her holy Virgin Mary. "... Jesus Christ, ... the word of life who was God and took flesh of the holy Virgin Mary, these things thus came to pass."<sup>51</sup> There are a number of *huthōmos*<sup>52</sup> that refer to Mary as Ever Virgin Mother of God. It affirms the sanctity of Mary by calling her spotless, sinless, pure womb, etc.<sup>53</sup>

In the daily prayers of the Malankara Church, the faithful unceasingly praise the Ever Virgin. In the first watch of the night vigil on Monday, also her purity or spotlessness is praised. "Blessed among women, by whom the malediction upon the earth was uprooted and the sentence of judgement came to an end. Mystery of purity, full of the beauty of holiness, our mouths are too little to tell your story."<sup>54</sup> In the *kōlo*<sup>55</sup> of the morning prayer

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<sup>49</sup> *The Daily prayers*, 31

<sup>50</sup> Jacob Serugh uses the symbol of fire from the biblical sources to symbolise Mary's motherhood. In the context of the symbol of Mary as the "Ark of the Covenant," he also sees Mary as the "Ark full of Fire" and as the "Fire that Burns up the Thorns of Sin." (See PUTHUPARAMPIL, *The Mariological Thought*, 22-30)

<sup>51</sup> *The Order of the Holy Qurbono*, 16

<sup>52</sup> The concluding hymn of a liturgical celebration

<sup>53</sup> *Visudha Qurbono Taksa*, 265-266

<sup>54</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 54

<sup>55</sup> Hymn of praise, commemoration and petition

of Monday, the Virgin Mother is depicted as the burning bush in the Old Testament and praises her virginity. The hymn goes like this: “As the fire rested on the bush and it was not consumed, God descended and rested on the Virgin, for he was pleased to take flesh from her, and he did not break the seal of her virginity.”<sup>56</sup> The *sedro*<sup>57</sup> of the first watch of the night prayer on Wednesday affirms that Mary is ever virgin and Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Here she is presented as mother of mercy and high refuge and the first born in heaven. The holy Virgin Mary is blessed because she brought forth the Son of God in her virginity, who created the world and feeds all creation.<sup>58</sup> The tradition of proclaiming the purity of her body and mind by addressing her ever virgin is very clear from the prayer of the sixth hour on Friday. “Blessed are you, Mary, who in your virginity were a pure pearl without stain; the King of kings saw you purity and sent his Son and he descended and dwelt in you, that he might deliver Adam and his children from the slavery of sin.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, in the Oriental liturgy the faithful praise the purity of her body and mind through the title ‘ever virgin.’

### 1.6.3. Mary, The Second Heaven

In the Malankara liturgy, Mary is praised as the second dwelling place of God. There are a number of prayers communicating Mary’s relation to Christ, Church and people in the Malankara Liturgy. All the sixth hour’s prayers of the canonical prayer contain beautiful hymns on Mary. Every *kōlo* has at least one stanza concerning Mary. In the weekly cycle of the Malankara Catholic Church Wednesday is totally dedicated to Mother Mary. Throughout the day, in all the prayers she is praised. The first watch of the night vigil on Monday is fully dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In its supplication song, she is praised as Second Heaven. “The Holy Virgin calls us today that we should speak of her. Let us purge our hearing, that her fair story may fill

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<sup>56</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 64

<sup>57</sup> A chain of prayers

<sup>58</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 107

<sup>59</sup> *The Book Of Common Prayers*, 18



us all with wonder. Second heaven in whose womb rested the Lord Most High and came forth to drive away all the darkness from the face of the earth.”<sup>60</sup> Again, she is praised as the dwelling place in the same prayer. “Glory to the Father who chose Mary in her humility. Adoration to the Son who in humility descended and dwelt in her. Thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit who makes his dwelling place in the humble. To him whose nature is One in Three, all glory.”<sup>61</sup> In the Morning Prayer on Wednesday the Syrian Christians pray: “Mary was a second heaven to you, Lord of all; in holiness you dwelt in her and came forth from her into the world. And dying on the Cross, you gave her in trust to your disciple. By the prayers of your Mother we beseech you, our Saviour, make your peace and calm dwell in the four quarters of the earth.”<sup>62</sup> Here the people clearly seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Second Heaven.

There are some other references where Holy Mary is represented as the dwelling place of God. As we all know God dwells only in heaven. In the Monday evening prayer we pray: “Mary was a ship, she bore and sailed into harbour laden with the pilot, the Lord of all creation. She is blazing bush that filled Moses with wonder, at the word that came from the middle of the fire. From her womb the Word manifested himself to us.”<sup>63</sup> In the first watch of the night vigil on Monday we praise Mary: “A young maiden of the house of David whose name was Mary, was the chariot which carried the Saviour of the world.”<sup>64</sup> The *Kolo* of the sixth hour of Wednesday attributes a number of biblical imageries to Mary: “Peace be with you, Mary, ark of mysteries which Moses set up; peace be with you, veil of the Spirit, by which the living waters are represented, peace be with you, fortified city of which David, son of Jesse, spoke; and God came forth from your womb.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 54

<sup>61</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 54

<sup>62</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 122

<sup>63</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 45

<sup>64</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 53

<sup>65</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 165



### 1.6.4. Mary, The Second Eve

In the Supplication prayer in the first watch of night vigil on Thursday the Blessed Virgin Mary is addressed as the Eve who brought forth the Immanuel. “Come in peace, fair among women and full of beauty. Peace be with you, veil which is spread over the creation. Come in peace, innocence undefiled. Peace be with you, Eve who brought forth Emmanuel.”<sup>66</sup> The special intercessory prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary calls her in the following names: The Second Eve, The urn of the manna, the ark in which the staff of Aaron which budded was kept, ladder of Jacob, unsowed field, well with no limits, etc.<sup>67</sup> All these titles are the expression of her children’s devotion and faith in her.

## 2. Mary in the Contemporary Teachings of the Church

Right from the beginning of Christianity, in the early centuries itself the Blessed Virgin Mary has enjoyed a place of honour in the dogmatic teachings of the Church. In early centuries, Mariology was part of the Christology. So, the teachings of the Church on Mary is seen in its Christological teachings. Later Mariology developed as a separate branch of theology.

Here we introduce some of the magisterial teachings of the Church contemporaneous to the Mar Ivanios whose thoughts on Mary are our main focus in this study. It helps us to compare the mariological vision of Mar Ivanios which he developed in the matrix of Oriental theology and liturgy in relation to the mariological vision in the official teaching of the Church, which today is by and large Western.

### 2.1. *Ineffabilis Deus*

Pope Pius IX solemnly declared the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a dogma of faith on 8 December 1854 by the bull “*Ineffabilis Deus*”. By the immaculate conception

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<sup>66</sup> ACHARYA, *Prayer With the Harp of the Spirit*, 134

<sup>67</sup> *Parisudha Daivamāthāvinte Perunālukalile Prārthana Kramam*, 77-78

of Mary, it is understood that she was free from original sin from the first instance of her existence as a human person. During the pronouncement of the dogma of Immaculate Conception the Pope defined the doctrine thus: "... we declare, pronounce and define: the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God and, therefore, firmly and constantly to be believed by all the faithful."<sup>68</sup> Mary was conceived and born in the normal way of marriage, the daughter of a human father and mother. But she was filled with grace of God from the moment of the joining of her soul and body.<sup>69</sup>

## 2.2. *Munificentissimus Deus*

Pope Pius XII solemnly pronounced the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven as a dogma on 1 November 1950, by the apostolic constitution, "*Munificentissimus Deus*." The Pope said, "We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the immaculate mother of God, the Ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."<sup>70</sup> The Catholic Church teaches that the Blessed Virgin Mary who is innocent, spotless, all pure, stainless, most pure in soul and body is taken up into heaven after her death. God did not allow the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be corrupted because she is the Mother of God and she co-operated in the salvific plan of God through her obedience. For this humble co-operation in the salvific plan she is rewarded by the glorious assumption into heaven, by God. The meaning of the Assumption of Mary is clear from the apostolic constitution.

From all eternity and by one and the same decree of predestination the august Mother of God is united in a sublime way with Jesus Christ; immaculate in her conception, a spotless virgin in her divine motherhood,

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<sup>68</sup> WILLIAM, *Papal Documents on Mary*, 25

<sup>69</sup> KOTTACKAL, *Behold Your Mother*, 82

<sup>70</sup> WILLIAM, *Papal Documents on Mary*, 239

the noble companion of the divine Redeemer who won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, she finally obtained as the crowning glory of her privileges to be preserved from the corruption of the tomb and like her Son before her, to conquer death and to be raised body and soul to the glory of heaven, to shine refulgent as Queen at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of ages (cf. 1Tim. 1:17)<sup>71</sup>

### 2.3. Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Mary

There are reference to the role of Mary in the life of the Church and the Christian Faithful in many documents of the Council. However, for the sake of brevity and comprehension we focus our attention solely on the dogmatic constitution the Church, the *Lumen gentium*.

The council upholds the importance of Mary's free consent to the divine motherhood in the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*. According to the document, she freely cooperated in the salvation of humankind rather than being a passive instrument. The council affirms her Divine Motherhood because She cooperated in the work of salvation through her faith and obedience. "The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world, is acknowledged and honoured as being truly Mother of God and of the Redeemer." (LG.53) The document also deals with her association with Christ in the work of redemption and her intercession. She cooperated in the sense that she conceived and brought forth the saviour, the Son of God. The document affirms that she will intercede for us before her son because through her Divine Motherhood she initiated us into the new life. The Council also affirms the idea that she is holy and free from all kinds of sin and thus can be called Ever Virgin. "It is no wonder then that it was customary for the Fathers to refer to the Mother of God as all holy and free from every stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new

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<sup>71</sup> WILLIAM, *Papal Documents on Mary*, 287



creature.” (LG 56) The Council Fathers also compare the Virgin Mary with Eve of the Garden of Eden and call her “Mother of the Living” “and frequently claim: death through Eve, life through Mary.” (LG 56) In conclusion, the document says that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the type of the Church. “As St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ.” (LG 63)

## 2.4. *Marialis Cultus*

*Marialis cultus* is an apostolic exhortation of Pope Paul VI on devotion to Mary. This exhortation was given in 1974 as a result of the call for liturgical reformation of the Second Vatican Council. In *Marialis cultus* the Pope “encouraged the faithful to maintain both personal and public devotion to Mary in a difficult time of doubt and questioning.”<sup>72</sup> In the first part it deals with the link between liturgy and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and in the second part he offers directives favouring the development of that devotion and in the part three he gives some observations on two exercises of piety: the Angelus and the Rosary. In conclusion it deals with the theological and pastoral value of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to this document, reciting the rosary is a practice strongly recommended by our predecessors and widely practised among the Christian faithful. We have to promote the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary because Mary “is a model of the spiritual attitude with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries.”<sup>73</sup> In short, it deals with the private and public devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

## 2.5. *Redemptoris Mater*

The *Redemptoris mater* is the first Marian Encyclical of Pope John Paul II. Through this encyclical, what he intended is to present Mary’s place in the mystery of Christ. In it, he extensively deals with her role in the work of salvation. According to the

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<sup>72</sup> *Précis of Official Catholic Teaching*, 120

<sup>73</sup> POPE PAUL VI, *Marialis cultus*, 25

Pope, through her obedience to the Word of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary is united with her son and therefore no doubt that she is the centre of the pilgrim Church. In the introduction itself he makes it clear that the Blessed Virgin Mary has a precise place in the plan of salvation.<sup>74</sup> Mary's obedience to the Word of God is highly praised in this encyclical. By accepting this announcement, Mary was to be "Mother of the Lord", and the divine mystery of the incarnation was to be accomplished in her: "The Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined mother should precede the incarnation." (LG 58) And Mary gives this consent after she has heard everything the messenger had to say. This fiat of Mary – "let it be done to me" – was decisive on the human level for the accomplishment of the divine mystery.<sup>75</sup> In this encyclical, he compares Mary's faith to that of Abraham because his faith constituted the beginning of the Old Covenant and Mary's faith at annunciation is the beginning of the New Covenant.<sup>76</sup> In short Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris mater* thoroughly deals with the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the salvific plan of God.

### 3. Mary in the Vision of Mar Ivanios

In the first two sections we have dealt with the basic mariological concepts in the Oriental Churches and its importance in the Contemporary Theology. The Mariology of his tradition and the development in the contemporary theology influenced Mar Ivanios, being a member of an Oriental Church. This influence is evident when he addresses the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Daivamāthāvu* (Mother of God), *Nithyakanyaka* (Ever Virgin), *Randām Swargam* (Second Heaven) and *Randām Hawa* (Second Eve). In line with these sacred traditions, Mar Ivanios promoted and encouraged the celebration of the major feasts of Mary the Mother of God in the Malankara Catholic Church.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Précis of Official Catholic Teaching*, 146

<sup>75</sup> *Précis of Official Catholic Teaching*, 152

<sup>76</sup> *Précis of Official Catholic Teaching*, 153

<sup>77</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 224-225



### 3.1 *Daivamāthāvu* (Mother of God)

The term 'Mother of God' is very dear to Mar Ivanios. In all his writings and exhortations, he takes a special care to call Holy Mary as *Daivamāthavu* or *Daivajanani* (Mother of God). While giving instructions on the celebration of the Marian feasts in his book *Sabhavatsaram* he extensively uses the title Mother of God. For example, when he speaks about Sundays before Christmas in the liturgical year, he mentions the name of one of the Sundays as "*Mesaltho*". He translates this word as "*Daivamāthāvu* (Mother of God) visits Elizabeth."<sup>78</sup> Again, when he speaks about child Jesus being worshipped, he addresses the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of God. According to him "as St. Joseph and *Daivmāthāvu* adored child Jesus, the Church also adores him."<sup>79</sup> It is interesting to note that instead of calling her St. Mary as he does for St. Joseph he uses the title Mother of God. Again in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the same book he addresses her as *Daivamāthāvaya kanyakamariam* (Mary the Virgin Mother of God).<sup>80</sup> The details about the celebration of the fifteen days lent and eight days lent in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Sabhāvatsaram* is another occasion where he calls the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of God.<sup>81</sup>

While speaking about monthly recollection in the book *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, Mar Ivanios advises the one who meditates to seek the intercession of *Visudha Daivamāthāvu* (Holy Mother of God).<sup>82</sup> In the book *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, he assures the one who meditates the help of the *Daivamaāthāvu* in his spiritual growth.<sup>83</sup> When Mar Ivanios founded Bethany Ashram on 15 August 1919 at *Perunādu* he designated the Blessed Virgin Mary as its special patroness. His aim was to propose the example of Holy Mary for religious life to the members of his congregation. In the Holy Rule of the congregation he founded, he gives a special place to Holy Mary. This is taken over to the

<sup>78</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 46

<sup>79</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 46

<sup>80</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram*, 66

<sup>81</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhāvatsaram* 88

<sup>82</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 153

<sup>83</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sāhāyi*, 199



present Holy Rule of the Congregation: “The patron saints of our Congregation are the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, ...”<sup>84</sup> In accordance with the mind of Mar Ivanios, the present Holy Rule advises the members of the congregation to have a childlike devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. “Those who profess chastity should have great devotion to the Holy Eucharist, the source of their life and strength. They should also practise childlike devotion to the most holy Virgin Mother of God and daily entrust to her the purity of their souls and bodies.”<sup>85</sup>

In his reply to the letter of Pope Pius XII on the question of the declaration of the dogma on the assumption of Mary into heaven he expatiates extensively on the different facets of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To speak about the Virgin Mary he uses the title Mother of God. Through this letter he proclaims that it is the tradition of the Oriental churches to call her the *Daivamāthāvu* and they believe that this *Daivamāthāvu* is taken up into heaven with her body and soul. He wrote: “With regard to the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar, both the Syro-Malankarites and the Syro-Malabarians, such a declaration will give a new impetus to their filial devotion to the Mother of God whom they venerate in a very special manner.”<sup>86</sup> In this letter he strongly recommended to the Pope to have the doctrine of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary declared as the Church Doctrine. According to him it would double his joy and also of his people. “I therefore with my priests and people most humbly beg Your Holiness to have the doctrine of the bodily Assumption into Heaven of the Mother of God declared as a dogma of the Church.”<sup>87</sup>

To sum up, for Mar Ivanios, it is the tradition of the Church to call Mary the Mother of God. Most of the time Mar Ivanios, addresses the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of God. All his pastoral letters ends with the invocation of the blessing of the Virgin Mother of God. In his thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

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<sup>84</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No.7.i

<sup>85</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No.103

<sup>86</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 146

<sup>87</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 146

of his M.A. degree, he proves with authentic historical facts that the Syrian Christians were not Nestorians. In his opinion, the Syrian Christians of Kerala traditionally believe that there is only one single unique person Jesus Christ with two natures and the Blessed Virgin Mary is the mother of this single unique person. Therefore we can rightly call her as Mother of God.<sup>88</sup> From these references, it is clear that he believed that the Blessed Virgin Mary is *yoldās ālōho*, the Mother of God.

### 3.2. *Nithyakanyaka* (Ever Virgin)

The title “Ever Virgin” was well known to Mar Ivanios, the 20<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Church Father. He believed in the perpetual virginity of Holy Mary and propagated this title through his writings and exhortations. For him ever virginity is not only the physical virginity but also her sinless state. That is why he calls her *holy woman*, *martha mariām*, *kanyakamāthvu*, *nirmala kanyaka*, *visudha māthāvu*, Most Holy Virgin etc.<sup>89</sup> She is ever virgin and holy because she is chosen by God for the incarnation.

God chose the Blessed Virgin Mary for the execution of his plan for the salvation of mankind. He blessed her and bestowed his grace on her to become the Mother of God the Son. The objective was to redeem mankind from sin and death through the Son of God, incarnated through her. Since the ‘pure’ cannot live in an impure place, God the Father kept Holy Mary ‘pure’ for the incarnation of his Son. This is what Mar Ivanios meant when he calls her *Nithyakanyaka* (Ever Virgin). According to him as part of the salvific plan, with the special grace of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary remained pure, unaffected by sin. He writes in his book *Visudha Māthāvu* that, “She is the virgin among the virgins, untouched by sin.”<sup>90</sup> Here in this statement his whole idea about Mary’s virginity is very clear. Again, in the same book he writes, “She was most holy than any other human being, so that we can

<sup>88</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Suriyani Kristhyanikal Nestoriar Āyirunno?*

<sup>89</sup> GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarasanam*, 223

<sup>90</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 9 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 224



call her the queen of saints. She is the holy virgin. She is the one who was chosen by God and fully dedicated to God, her body and soul, and led a pure life.”<sup>91</sup> With the usage of the word ‘*visudha*’ or ‘*holy*’ what Mar Ivanios meant is her purity of heart and body. This shows that by addressing Holy Mary *nithyakanyaka* he meant not only her physical virginity but also her sinless state of life.

Just before sunrise, in the east a star rises. This is the morning star or *Perumīn*. Mary is the morning star who rose before Jesus, the son of righteousness. It was already prophesied that, through Joachim and Anna, God would give rise to a holy virgin in the world. God from the womb itself chose her, like Jeremiah and John the Baptist. God loved her so much. In the Old Testament, there are so many pre-figuration and examples about Mary. God prepared her already a virgin and saint. How great is her glory.<sup>92</sup>

In many of his writings and exhortations, he calls her as *Nithyakanyakayāya Daivamāthāvu* (Ever Virgin Mother of God). According to him, “she became the Mother of God in her virginity.”<sup>93</sup> In the same book, he continues to call her *Kanyakamāthāvu* (Virgin Mother).

The whole world heaved a sigh of relief when she responded to the angel as “Here I am the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” The power of the Spirit overshadowed her. Word became flesh in her. Then she became the Mother of God. So she needs to be venerated by the whole world. She is the most holy virgin! ... She is the most holy virgin! ... Her virginity, humility, and faith were revealed in this event. The Angel said, not only God would become human, and Mary would become Mother of God, but also she

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<sup>91</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 2 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 222

<sup>92</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 4,7 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 224

<sup>93</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 23 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 226



would conceive even without loosing her virginity. How marvellous it is!<sup>94</sup>

The writings of Mar Ivanios brings to us the tradition of his time and the faith of the Church to which he belonged. In his book *Dhyānakusumangal* (Book of Meditation) he seeks the intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary. In a prayer during the meditation he addresses Mary as “Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of my Lord, the saviour.”<sup>95</sup> In all his intercessory prayers, he calls her ‘my mother’ and this shows his filial devotion to the mother of his saviour. It is interesting to note that whenever he calls her ‘my mother’ it will be preceded by the adjective ‘Holy’ (*Visudhakanyaka* or Holy Virgin). In his book *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi* he puts forward the model of the Holy Virgin Mary to prepare for a retreat. He says that, “We should prepare ourselves like the Holy Virgin Mary prepared herself to take part in the passion and death of the Son of God.”<sup>96</sup> In the book *Visudha Kumpasāram* (Holy Confession) he prays like this, “The Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of my saviour Jesus Christ, I know that you are waiting for my repentance. Please intercede for me before God.”<sup>97</sup> In one of his speeches, he deals with the subject divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. In the course of the speech he deals with the Holy Mary and her role in the salvific plan.<sup>98</sup> In his presidential speech during the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Kerala Catholic Congress in 1932, he makes a special reference to the Holy Mary. He praises the Mother of God like this: “In the midst of them, she, the immaculate mother of the lamb, yes, that, Ever Virgin enshrouded with serene and golden clothes, has been sitting as described in the apocalyptic words of John the apostle “with the brightness of valuable jewel with sparkling of amethyst on the golden throne which is placed on the carpets of green pastures.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 25 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 226

<sup>95</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal*, 165

<sup>96</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 140

<sup>97</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Kumpasāram*, 18

<sup>98</sup> INCHAKAOLODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 56

<sup>99</sup> INCHAKAOLODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 31

In his reply to the letter of Pope Pius XII on Assumption, he generally calls Holy Mary as *Kanyaka* and *Nithyakanyaka* (Virgin and Ever Virgin). In the beginning itself, he affirms the faith of his Church in the Assumption of Mary into heaven. From this letter Mar Ivanios' understanding of the Marian tradition of the Malankara Church is very clear. According to him even before the Catholic Church thought about the dogma the Syrian Church in Kerala had the tradition of celebrating the feast of the Assumption of Mary. "The Jacobite Church, both of Malankara and of Syria, celebrate the *transitus* (*shūnōyō*) of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, and the Feast is preceded by a fast called the Fifteen Days' Fast, the last day being the Feast day itself."<sup>100</sup> "The Feast therefore and the fast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary were being kept by the Syrian Church of Malankara (Malabar) before 1599."<sup>101</sup> In both these statements he addresses St. Mary as blessed virgin.

### 3.3. *Randām Swargam* (Second Heaven)

Second heaven or *randām swargam* is purely an Eastern concept. This Eastern concept is very elaborately dealt with in the writings of Mar Ivanios. According to him the Blessed Virgin Mary is queen of all holy persons and more holy than any other human being<sup>102</sup> because God came down and dwelt in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "The omnipotent God dwelt in the womb of this virgin as a child for nine months."<sup>103</sup> Therefore, this womb of the virgin is the second dwelling place of God. God dwells in heaven and it is his presence that makes a place heaven. So he strongly argues that since God has chosen the womb of the Holy Virgin Mary as his second dwelling place we can rightly call her as the Second Heaven. "Mary was the place selected by God out of all creatures to come and dwell, so he prepared it to be most holy place. God dwells in heaven. Wherever God dwells, that

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<sup>100</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 144

<sup>101</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 146

<sup>102</sup> GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 222

<sup>103</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 2, 3 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 223



place is indeed Heaven. Oh Mary, you are the Second Heaven, as God of all creatures dwelt in you; thus told a father of the church.”<sup>104</sup>

There are some other instances also where Mar Ivanios calls Holy Mary as *randām swargam* (Second Heaven). The most important among them is the speech he made in Canada. According to him, it is his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary who is known as second heaven that inspired him to attend the Marian Congress in Canada. In this speech there he takes a special interest to present the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Second Heaven (*dvidīya swargam* or *randām swargam*). “I accepted the invitation of the Archbishop of Ottawa to take part in the Marian Congress only because of my devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary who is also known as the Second Heaven.”<sup>105</sup> Again, he says that the faith of the Catholics in Canada to this Second Heaven inspired and motivated him a lot.<sup>106</sup> The newspaper “Catholic Record” published the message which he gave before he left Canada. In that message, also he calls her the Second Heaven (*randām swargam*). Moreover, he says that it is the tradition of the Oriental Churches to call the Blessed Virgin Mary the second heaven.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.4 *Randām Hawa* (Second Eve)

Eve-Mary typology is one of the most important typologies of the Eastern churches. Eastern Church fathers make a parallelism between the Eve the first woman and Holy Mary, the Mother of God. While the first woman brought death to the humanity through her disobedience, Mary, the Second Eve brought life to the humanity through her obedience to the word of God. Mar Ivanios who is deeply rooted in Eastern Spirituality also thinks, in the same line. In his writings, he calls Mary the Second Eve.

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<sup>104</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 9 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 224

<sup>105</sup> INCHAKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 234

<sup>106</sup> INCHAKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 234

<sup>107</sup> INCHAKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 237



According to him while the first Eve of the Garden of Eden broke the relationship with God through sin, the Blessed Virgin Mary reunited us with God by becoming the Mother of God in her virginity. “Holy Mary is the Second Eve. Disobedience made first Eve to become a slave of sin. But the Second Eve by her full obedience saved humanity. Committing sin, first Eve offered misery and suffering over mankind. Keeping her virginity, the Second Eve, became the Mother of God and God thus provided salvation and redemption to all.”<sup>108</sup>

Mar Ivanios brings in the idea of Eve-Mary typology by comparing the Genesis to Revelation. In Genesis 3:1-6 we read: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent. “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden: but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die... she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” In Revelation 12:13 it is written, “So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.” According to Mar Ivanios, the characters are same in both Genesis and Revelation: one woman, one man and one serpent. While the serpent wins over the first woman, Eve of the Garden of Eden; the Second woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary defeats the serpent and brings us the salvation.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, we can rightly call her the Second Eve. In the prayer, which he wrote in Syriac on Mary, he makes a special reference to the Holy Mary the Second Eve.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 13 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 224-225

<sup>109</sup> GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarasanam*, 225

<sup>110</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 128

## 4. Reflections on the Vision of Mar Ivanios on Mary

Mar Ivanios as we have seen thus far, like the other Oriental Church Fathers used the titles like Mother of God, Ever Virgin, Second Heaven, and Second Eve to speak about the Holy Mary. These titles reveal the fact that she is the type and model of the Church. Mar Ivanios says that, “The blameless innocent life of Mary is model of our life. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Mt. 5:8). Holy mother was pure in heart and always she lived in the presence of God.”<sup>111</sup> The title ‘Mother of God’ conveys a vision of the Church significant for our time, with its over institutional structure and work. Mary, the model of the Church, is great not by her works but through believing God’s message, responding to it, giving God’s word its earthly life and offering it to the world. By saying, “let it be according to the word” she brought forth the Son of God. According to Mar Ivanios she submits herself to the will of God and cooperated in the plan of salvation. It is only because of her obedience, the word of God incarnated in the world. Through her divine motherhood she gave new life and hope to the humanity and thus she became the mother of humanity. “Traditional Mariology has held that Mary’s consent at the incarnation had ramifications in the mystery of redemption... Mary brings forth the source of spiritual life for all Christians; the one who brings life is a mother; therefore, Mary is in some way our spiritual mother. Thus, the divine maternity leads to doctrine of the spiritual maternity.”<sup>112</sup>

### 4.1. Mary Is the Model of the Church

By saying that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the model of the Church, it means that, it is she who brings the God and his love to human beings and shows the way to the heavenly life. She carries Jesus in her and shows us how to follow him. He wonders about the mystery of incarnation and says that it is this incarnation that had brought the love of God to us. The incarnation opened the

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<sup>111</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 30 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 227

<sup>112</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 43

channel of God's love through the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mar Ivanios opines that "God's incarnation is the miracle among the miracles. God revealed his divine goodness by becoming a human being. We can say that God became one among us."<sup>113</sup> It is the Blessed Virgin Mary who co-operated in the incarnation and allowed us to say that God became one among us. To show the greatness of Mary, Mar Ivanios shows the greatness of incarnation in his book *Dhyānakusumangal* with the help of few prayers from Christmas Service. The Lord who comes in the chariot of angels is now there in the earth with a virgin mother.<sup>114</sup> He continues that this miraculous child is great and he is the Son of God. Again, quoting other prayers, he tries to prove that this miraculous child is born from the Blessed Virgin Mary. His glory should be praised because he left his place in heaven and became human being and his mother Mary keeps Him in her hands.<sup>115</sup> The Blessed Virgin Mary dedicated herself to the will of God because she realised the love of God. Being the sons and daughters of the Church we dedicate ourselves and bear witness to the will of God as our beloved mother did. It is this Blessed Virgin Mary who gave birth to this miraculous son and initiated us into the love of God, which is generous, never failing and increasing.<sup>116</sup> Because of her unique vocation as Mother of God, she remains, as the type of the Church and Church has to re-live this virginal motherhood in its ministry as the mother of the faithful.

Mary is the model of the Church also as virgin. In Mar Ivanios' Mariology we find the Mariology of the Second Vatican Council.

In the mystery of the Church, which itself is rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplary both of virgin and mother. Through her faith and obedience she gave birth on earth to the very Son of the Father, not through the knowledge of man but by the overshadowing

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<sup>113</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 20

<sup>114</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 21

<sup>115</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 20

<sup>116</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 21



of the Holy Spirit. The Church herself is virgin who keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her spouse. Imitating the mother of her Lord and by the power of the Holy Spirit she preserves with virginal purity an integral faith, a firm hope and a sincere charity. (LG 63)

## 4.2. Mary is the Model of Faith Living

The Blessed Virgin Mary is a woman of faith. The principal passages in the Bible and Malankara Liturgy, which speak of Mary, emphasise that she holds a prime place among Christians above all because of her faith. Love, faith and hope the basic Christian virtues are seen in its depth in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her faith and hope at the time of conception challenged and grew at the time of Jesus' public life and matured at his death. She is the first member of the Church who practised these virtues strictly in her life and thus she eventually became the symbol of believing the post resurrection community. Being the Mother of God and Mother of the Church, she is the best model for all the Christian faithful and archetype of the Church.

In this role, she lives in her very person all that the Church lives, and is in this way symbol and model for the Church. This role begins with a faith, which receives the Redeemer, but is also instrumental in bringing redemption to others, in the same way that the Church can be seen as receiving redemption, but also as the instrument of redemption for its members... In this she mirrors Christianity and the ideal Christian, receiving the gift of God himself in grace-given freedom, with total commitment, and in such a way as to serve wholeheartedly the salvation of others.<sup>117</sup>

Divine Maternity is the prior cause of all other titles of Mary. By becoming the mother of God she "lives in her own person the life joined to Christ that is lived by the Church."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 35

<sup>118</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 42

In one of his prayers after meditation, Mar Ivanios praises the Lord who came into our being. According to him it's the Blessed Virgin Mary who brings the Lord to this world and therefore this mother Mary deserves all praise of honour. A child is born and that child is the Son of God and the mother of that child is the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>119</sup> Holy Mary, Mother of God shows the child Jesus to many people like Simeon and Hanna. Mar Ivanios says that, "St. John the Baptist loved Jesus when he was in the womb of the mother and Jesus blessed John in the womb itself. Angels sung *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* when Jesus was born. The shepherds visited the child Jesus and wise men came to adore the child Jesus. Simeon and Hanna adored child Jesus when he was brought to the temple."<sup>120</sup> According to Mar Ivanios Mother Mary is the central figure here in all these episodes. Since she is the mother, she is showing Jesus to all these people and reveals the great love of God. By her Divine Motherhood, she attracts everybody to Jesus. We find Mar Ivanios praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God to give the child Jesus to us to adore, as she gave him to those of her time.<sup>121</sup> Here, Mar Ivanios makes it clear Jesus born of the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Son of God. "Mary carried the one who is sitting at the right hand of God the Father for nine months. Here he uses some citations from Christmas liturgy to prove her divine motherhood."<sup>122</sup>

#### 4.3. Mary is a Sign of God's Intervention in History

"The Virginity of Mary is a sign that God has intervened in our history with a new creation and that redemption is his work, not ours. Virginity points in a visible way to the uniqueness of Jesus who has entered our history. It is not necessary for his divinity, but it is a forceful sign of that divinity. Finally, virginity may be a sign of Mary's consecration to God, though that does not seem the stress of the biblical texts."<sup>123</sup> As the Holy Virgin

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<sup>119</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 22

<sup>120</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 23

<sup>121</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 23

<sup>122</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyānakusumangal* - II, 25

<sup>123</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 25



(*nirmala kanyaka*)<sup>124</sup>, Mary came into being absolutely sinless. Her freedom from sin is a gloriously positive reality. She was untouched by sin – *pāpam thīndittillāthavaḷ*.<sup>125</sup> The Church teaching on the immaculate conception points to the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary is free from sin from the very moment of her existence. It is the state that every Christian hopes “to become at least by the final moment of our human pilgrimage.”<sup>126</sup> God possessed her totally and never allowed sin to corrupt her. She was the first human being since the fall of Adam, who was completely pleasing to God. For the sons and daughters of the Church, the temples of Holy Spirit, Mary is an example, which encourages them to live in purity of heart and body. As she had submitted to the Word of God and brought forth the Son of God to this world we mortals have to submit ourselves to the Word of God and bear witness to Christ and bring Christ to the world. In other words, as members of the Church, we are obliged to give witness to Christ. Mar Ivanian Mariology exhorts us to lead such a life pleasing to God.

#### 4.4. Mary is Model of Humanity

God’s encounter with Mary, the Second Eve<sup>127</sup> for the Salvation of the world is realised and continued in the Church. The Church is essentially a handmaid of the Lord in its ministry of praise, of proclamation and of charity. The Church lives out its holiness in the ordinary existence of men and women. The Blessed Virgin Mary does not seek to be separated from men but she lives in the midst of them in the ordinary circumstances of their life. The difference is she bears holiness in herself, the holiness of her life. “Mary as Archetype becomes naturally a model and example, too. She is the model against whom the Church as a whole and all her members can examine their own attitude toward their

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<sup>124</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 9 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 224

<sup>125</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 2 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 222

<sup>126</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 50

<sup>127</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 13 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 224



redemption and fullness of grace as they work out their own lives. The individual Church-member's awareness of being the Church (a task to be accomplished by his own moral decision) must be seen as ontologically and morally perfected by Mary's ideal image and example. The Church living in her individual members needs Mary for her growth toward what she is and toward her hidden potential."<sup>128</sup> She brought forth the Son of God to redeem us from the death which Eve, the First woman brought to us through her disobedience. "The Fathers stress Mary's obedience in contrast to Eve's disobedience, so that she counter-balance and frees what the disobedience of the first Eve placed in bondage. In this approach, the emphasis is on Mary's attitude as believer, her active faith response to the gift of life in her Son. The use of the Mary-Eve typology enables one to combine Mary's role as mother and at the same time believer of the Word. It also leads to a Mary-Church typology, for the Church is seen as the virginal mother, bringing forth Christ in her members in the new creation (Gal.4:19, 2Cor.11:2), while she is at the same time the faithful and obedient spouse of Christ who receives the gift of his love and his very life (Eph.5:21-33)."<sup>129</sup> By obeying the Word of God, Mother Mary became the model of the Church. As she brought forth the Son of God to this world, we have the obligation to follow Jesus Christ in this world.

Mary typifies the Church where Christ dwells. "Mary typifies the essence of the Church, a community of men and the Mystical Body of Christ, in whom the Divine Life of Christ dwells. This life is to be given to everyone who has been incorporated into this Body as a living member. The Church has performed her receptive co-redemption in Mary, her representative. It is in Mary that the Church has fully received her Redemption."<sup>130</sup> The Holy Virgin Mary, the Second Heaven<sup>131</sup> is a sign of the power, the grace and the love of God who alone can save us. "The Church is to be holy;

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<sup>128</sup> SEMMELROTH, *Mary, Archetype of the Church*, 157

<sup>129</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 42

<sup>130</sup> SEMMELROTH, *Mary, Archetype of the Church*, 166

<sup>131</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Māthāvu*, 9 as quoted in GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarsanam*, 224

her essence and all that she comprises provides the means for holiness in her members. This does not mean that each of her members is fully a saint, but it does mean that she should be able to point to some who have already exhibited oneness with God in their lives. Mary becomes the crown of this witnessing. One is more redeemed by being preserved from sin than by being forgiven afterward. In this sense Mary is perfectly redeemed and is archetype of holy Church.”<sup>132</sup> Mar Ivanios proposes Holy Mary as the model of our life. According to him, Christian holiness is embodied in the Holy Mary, the Second Heaven<sup>133</sup> and this holiness must be realised in us.

#### 4.5. Mary is a Model of our Eschatological Hope

“Mary is simply the first instance and most eminent example of the eschatological destiny of the Church.”<sup>134</sup> No doubt by the grace of God she provides hope to the Christian faithful and shows the way to greater hope. Therefore it is right to say that, “Mary is the Type of the Church which imparts salvation, insofar as by assuming the work of Christ she receives the fruits of that work both for herself and for the whole Church.”<sup>135</sup> We are required to co-operate with our redemption as the Blessed Virgin Mary had co-operated with the redemption of the entire Church. Mary is a living proclamation of the mystery of the grace of God, which always predestines us. Mary uniquely chosen to be the place for God to dwell for nine months is the perfect embodiment of the grace of the Lord. Mary is holy, as the heaven is because God had come and dwelt in her.

Therefore, Mar Ivanios, who calls Mary Ever Virgin Mother of God (*Nithykanyakayāya Daivamāthāvu*)<sup>136</sup>, puts challenge before us in his vision on Mary. He challenges us to follow the Blessed Virgin Mary who had dedicated herself fully to the Word

<sup>132</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 51

<sup>133</sup> INCHAKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 234

<sup>134</sup> TAMBASCO, *What Are They Saying About Mary?*, 52

<sup>135</sup> SEMMELROTH, *Mary, Archetype of the Church*, 89

<sup>136</sup> GNAYALLOOR, *Mariadarasanam Marthōmamuthal Innuvare*, 223



of God and thus had carried Jesus Christ in this world. We are called upon to become holy and thus go back to our original sinless status. By becoming the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary anticipates this status in her life and shows the way to it.

## Conclusion

As we have seen at the beginning our study, right from childhood Mar Ivanios loved Mary and tried to imitate her virtues. As he grew up, this devotion was not restricted to imitation of her virtues and invoking her powerful intercession but as a priest, he took the responsibility of instructing faithful about this handmaid of the Lord. Incidentally, most of the major events of Ivanios' life happened on major feast of the Blessed Mary.

This study is a humble attempt to bring out Mar Ivanios' vision on Mary in comparison with some of the supreme expressions of Oriental Mariology. Today we can see that there is relevance for the Mar Ivanios' vision on Mary for the Malankara Catholic church. By addressing Holy Mary as *Daivamāthāvu* (Mother of God), *Nithyakanyaka* (Ever Virgin), *randām swargam* (Second Heaven), and *randām Hawa* (Second Eve) he was not only championing the important tenets of the Eastern Mariology but also extolling her as a model par-excellence for the Church to emulate.

In the Oriental tradition, Mary is seen as the Mother of God because she brought forth the Son of God. By "ever virginity", what Oriental Churches mean, is not only physical virginity but also her purity of heart and body. According to tradition, she is all pure, stainless, and spotless dwelling place of God. Eve-Mary typology is another important element in the Mariology of the East. The Church Fathers compare Eve of the Garden of Eden who brought us death through her disobedience and Mary of New Testament who brought us life through her obedience.

The prayer, which Mar Ivanios wrote in Syriac, very well brings out his Mariology, which is deeply rooted in the Oriental Mariology. We see the essence of this Mariology in the Malankara



liturgy. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Malankara Church is not para-liturgical, but an integral part of the liturgy. By saying that the Blessed Virgin Mary is Mother of God Mar Ivanios intends to say that the Blessed Virgin Mary is not only *chritotokos* but *theotokos*, the mother of Jesus Christ who was both human and divine. By the titles Ever Virgin and Second Heaven, he refers to her sinless state or fathomless purity. Through these portrayals, Mar Ivanios was not only championing the important aspects of Eastern Mariology, but also extolled her as a model par excellence, model with which we must try to identify ourselves. He exhorted the faithful to practise her virtues and wear the attire of her sentiments – to try to think as Mary would think, speak as she would speak, work as she would work. He challenges us to follow the paths of Mary who dedicated herself fully to the Word of God and thus carried Jesus Christ in this world.

Mar Ivanios was indeed a Church Father who believed and propagated the Catholic teachings on Blessed Virgin Mary and propagated it, even before his communion with the Catholic Church. As a successor to the great Oriental Church Fathers, Mar Ivanios' vision on Mary is relevant for us. It will help us to bear Christ in this world as the Blessed Virgin Mary truly did.



# Mar Ivanios

## A Prophet of Hope

P. Vineeth Koodappattu OIC

### 0. Introduction

The term ‘eschatology’ takes its origin from the Greek word *eschatos*, which means the ‘last’. It was coined in Germany in the early part of the last century, when it was used primarily for that branch of systematic theology, which dealt with the last things namely death, judgment, heaven and hell<sup>1</sup>. The term eschatology, as John L. McKenzie admits, “still carries a sort of ambiguity and can literally mean the doctrine of last things.”<sup>2</sup> The traditional domain of the subject remained on one hand within the realm of the destiny of the individual, and on the other in the nature and structure of ‘a world beyond.’ The whole concept has been going through a process of evolution.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, literary and historical perspectives overshadowed the dogmatic. The term has been redefined to take more into actual content of biblical and related writings, to include the ultimate destiny of the Israelite or Jewish nation (national eschatology) and the

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<sup>1</sup> COLLINS, Eschatology and Apocalypticism, 1360

<sup>2</sup> Mc KENZIE, Aspects of Old Testament Thought, 1312

world in general (cosmic eschatology), as well as the destiny of the individual (personal eschatology). In place of concern of the future of the nation, some texts express hope for a righteous remnant or for the Church (collective eschatology).<sup>3</sup>

In this evolution eschatology has not only undergone structural systematisation and gained more clarity, shed off ambiguity, but also has widened its scope. In due course a shift of concentration from the structures of the 'world beyond' to a reflection on the nature of Christian hope took place. This was the result of the Christian search for finding meaning for the realities of life in the light of faith and future expectations. This search was, of course, done standing within the limits of the experience of history, and then transcended beyond this history with the backing of those experiences of salvation history. As a result, today, "Eschatology is much more than a stilted doctrine of last things concocted by the theologians and rejected by suspicious laity; within a technological setting it is more than ever to be considered a doctrine of hope, a doctrine of the future - with openness to its limitless possibilities."<sup>4</sup> Christian eschatology has thus become a Christian Theology of Hope and theology of history, which focus at large on the destiny of the whole world, and its history.

The general condition of the contemporary world, indeed, increases the relevance of Christian Theology of Hope.

No other age has mankind enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic well-being; and yet a huge proportion of the people of the world is plagued by hunger and extreme need while countless numbers are totally illiterate. At no time have men had such a keen sense of freedom, only to be faced by new forms of slavery in living and thinking. There is on the one hand a lively feeling of unity and of compelling solidarity of mutual dependence, and on the other cleavage of bitterly opposing camps. We have not yet seen the last of bitter

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<sup>3</sup> COLLINS, *Eschatology and Apocalypticism*, 1360

<sup>4</sup> CALIAN, *Theology Without Boundaries*, 94



political, social and economic hostility, and racial and ideological antagonism, nor are we free from the spectre of a war of total destruction... There is lastly a painstaking search for a better material world, without a parallel spiritual advancement. (GS 4)

The council has the following observation about the ordinary human response to this situation: "they hover between hope and anxiety and wonder uneasily about the present course of events." (GS 4) It is perfectly true that "it is a situation that challenges men to reply; they cannot escape." (GS 4) How can the Church, the continuer of Christ's mission, reply to the pressing demand of the situation? Becoming a Herald of Hope by providing a faith response (theology) of Hope, I suppose.

This study is an attempt to understand the Theology of Hope of Mar Ivanios - the father of Malankara Catholic Church - deduced from his life and writings. Since faith is a given reality, the Bible and traditions, the two channels through which faith is handed down, have influenced his Christian faith experience and reflection on faith experience (theology). In order to understand Mar Ivanios' theology of hope, an awareness of the Biblical eschatology and the Christian tradition he inherited is imperative. Therefore, the historical background that contributed to the formation of Mar Ivanios' Theology of Hope is briefly dealt with in this article. A sketch of the eschatology that is found in his writings then follows it. No knowledge is useful if it does not enhance our being in the world. The comparison between the contemporary theology of hope, and that of Mar Ivanios, aims at such a result. This will also facilitate a deeper understanding and a comprehensive reinterpretation of Mar Ivanian eschatology. The efficacy of his vision in enabling his followers to respond to the present day situations in the light of faith, hope and charity is reflected upon, in the last part of this study. To sum up, this study aims altogether at knowing Mar Ivanios' theology of hope, its roots, its strengths/weaknesses and its relevance to our times.

# 1. The Roots of Mar Ivanian Theology of Hope

Mar Ivanios was born and brought up in the faith and traditions of the Malankara Church. The spirituality of this Church is deeply biblical and liturgical.<sup>5</sup> The liturgy of this Church is characteristic in that “in it the whole salvation history is interpreted in the light of patristic tradition.”<sup>6</sup> Mar Ivanios indeed showed great zeal in learning scripture and developing a spirituality based on scripture and liturgy.<sup>7</sup> Therefore it can be reasonably concluded that the scripture, liturgy and patristic traditions have contributed in forming the theological insights of Mar Ivanios. This section intends to give a brief sketch of those roots of Mar Ivanios’ Theology of Hope. First a brief survey of the Biblical Eschatology is done. It is followed by a short study of the Eschatology in the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church. The Eucharistic liturgy is given importance because “the mystery of the Eucharist is the true centre of the sacred liturgy and indeed of the whole Christian life.”<sup>8</sup> Yet another reason for choosing the Eucharistic liturgy is that the sacrament of the Eucharist is exclusively termed as “the Holy and Divine Liturgy because the Church’s whole liturgy finds its centre and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament.” (CCC 1330) As the liturgy of this Church is deeply embedded in the patristic tradition, an elaborate study of the patristic eschatology is bypassed. Brevity of this article also demands it. As representatives of the orient, the eschatology of two of the Cappadocian Fathers and Two Syrian Fathers are also surveyed herein briefly.

## 1.1. Eschatology of The Old Testament

The eschatology of the Old Testament is intimately related to the fulfilment of the divine promises of a better future to God’s own chosen people. However, this differs from the ordinary hopes

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<sup>5</sup> See PANICKER, *The Holy Qurbano*, 6-7

<sup>6</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 117

<sup>7</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 104; INCHAKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 51 terms Mar Ivanios as ‘the liturgist’.

<sup>8</sup> *Eucharisticum mysterium*

of better future and is “confined to those promises that speak of the future with significant discontinuities from the present.”<sup>9</sup> The Old Testament expectation of the glorious future is fully anchored on faith and trust in Yahweh and not in any human endeavours. Such a hope was always a hoping against hope, in human parameters, “and so most scholars agree in distinguishing them from some ordinary hopes for a better future by calling them eschatology.”<sup>10</sup> If we look for a dogma regarding the end of the world, time or of history it is absent in the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup> However we find promises regarding the end of unrighteousness (Jer 33:8), of hostilities (Mic 4:3), of human frailty (Is 35:5-6), of hunger (Ezek 36:30) and of harm to life (Is 11:9). From all these we can decipher that the vision of ‘glorious future’ Old Testament deals with the issues of the contemporary world through out and offers hope against hopelessness. “One of the distinctive features of these hopes is its sense of radical wrongness of the present world and the conviction that radical changes to make things right will indeed occur ‘in that day’, a time only known to God.”<sup>12</sup>

The fulfillment of promise is therefore in the transformation, resultant victory over the evil in the God destined manner and the end of evil. The OT eschatology is not simply an offering of a pie in the sky. The hope has as its fulcrum ‘the Zion’ – the dwelling place of Yahweh. Similarly the fulfillment is not merely showered upon from heaven but is the result of a threefold transformation – of the human person, of the society and of the nature.

### 1.1.1. Eschatology And ‘Zion’

Most of the eschatological material of the Old Testament, in the context of exile, gives prominence to the re-establishment of the people of God in their homeland. The prophet Zechariah speaks of the Lord’s promise: “Thus says the LORD: I will return to the Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of

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<sup>9</sup> GOWAN, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 1

<sup>10</sup> GOWAN, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 2

<sup>11</sup> Mc KENZIE Aspects of Old Testament thought, 1312

<sup>12</sup> GOWAN, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 2



hosts shall be called the holy mountain” (Zech 8: 3). In the city all will enjoy peace and security with no one left out (Zech 8:4-5). However, the peace, prosperity and security of the city is not ‘secular’ but the source of the good life in Zion is the presence of Yahweh in its midst. “This is one beautiful picture of the ideal future, tied very closely to the events and issues of the immediate present, as effective eschatology always is; containing clear ethical implications, as responsible eschatology always should; with an outlook that includes gentiles as well as Jews”<sup>13</sup>

### 1.1.2. Eschatology And The Threefold Transformation

At the dawn of that day hoped for, God will transform the human person. The transformation will be radical and interior (Ezek 36:25-27). It begins with listening to Yahweh’s call for repentance (Is 59:20, Jer 29:10-14). The human turning back from sin will be rewarded by the eschatological forgiveness (Is 33:24, Ezek 20:40-44, Zech 13:1). As a result, a new creation is effected within the person (Is 30:20-21, Jer 32:39-40). The end result will be the new person or a re-discovery of the personhood of a human being (Is 33:24, 35:5-6, Jer 33:6, Ezek 16:60). The most significant characteristic of this transformed person is his/her ability to obey God in the fullness of his/her freedom.

The society also will undergo a transformation and attain peace. The righteous king will rule over the people and justice will be served. All enmity will be overcome and hostile attitudes will give way to full acceptance, even towards the hostile ‘nations.’ “We begin with hostile attitudes that seem to be content with hoping for nothing less than total destruction of the nations, then move towards various kinds of expectations of world peace which allow for the continuing existence of other peoples,”<sup>14</sup> is what D.E. Gowan observes regarding centrality of peace in OT Eschatology. Another scholar opines, “unity between nations; peace among people and a harmony between nature and humans were considered to be the trade marks of such a prophetic eschatology.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> GOWAN, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 6

<sup>14</sup> GOWAN, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 48

<sup>15</sup> CHANDRANKUNNEL, *In Search of a Holistic Eschatology*, 41

The third aspect of eschatological transformation is the transformation of the nature. A new natural order is what is hoped for (Is 11:6-9, 61:20). There will be abundant fertility (Is 4:2, Joel 2:3). Along with the elimination of hunger a new earth will be created (Is 35:1-10, 65:17-18, Ezek 47:1-12) and its rule will be "they shall not hurt or destroy" (Is 65:25). Here too the emphasis is upon sharing in the love and generosity of God.

To conclude, the Old Testament eschatology has, as its bedrock, the trust in the faithfulness of Yahweh. It understands the future to be completely in the hands of God. Still there is a strong emphasis on human participation. Its hope is a worldly hope, emphasizing more on human society than on personal salvation.<sup>16</sup> The Old Testament Eschatology delves deeply into the past and present experiences in order to express hope for the future. Thus it is both a Theology of Hope as well as of history. It, prominently, has ethical overtones and lays the foundation of later New Testament expectation of the Kingdom of God.

### 1.1.3. The Old Testament and Resurrection

The early Old Testament texts have practically little to say about resurrection. "The Semites had no thought about life after death. For them all rewards and punishments are on this earth. The good man is blessed and is prosperous, while the wicked are punished here."<sup>17</sup> Later some kind of a notion of final retribution developed in the struggle to solve the issue of evil and suffering of the just. We find this development in the book of Job. The book of wisdom speaks of an after life (Wis 2:1ff) in which the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished. "Soon, faint images of resurrection began to gather and by the time of Maccabees become stronger."<sup>18</sup> It is in the Old Testament apocalyptic tradition that we find the clear mention of resurrection - Daniel 12:1-2. It is an apocalyptic book written during the Maccabean period.<sup>19</sup> Similar

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<sup>16</sup> GOWAN, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 122, 123

<sup>17</sup> FRANCIS, *Come Lord Jesus Come*, 15

<sup>18</sup> FRANCIS, *Come Lord Jesus Come*, 15

<sup>19</sup> FRANCIS, *Come Lord Jesus Come*, 16



hope is evident in the book of Maccabees and later this was taken up by most of the Jews including Jesus, except Sadducees.

## 1.2. Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels

The eschatology of synoptics is centred on the person of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, the central piece of Jesus' proclamation. Jesus took up the hopes and expectations of the people and proclaimed, "the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news." (Mk 1:14; Mt 4:12-17; Lk 4:14-15) The exorcisms and healing miracles of Jesus are presented as an eschatological cosmic victory of God over Satan and evil. The death of Jesus Christ is yet another eschatological event that liberates the humanity (Mk 10:45, Mt 20:28). Jesus accepted it in fidelity to God the Father. This was an expression of trust in God who vindicates his faithful witnesses.

Resurrection is not an end in itself but a step towards another glorious event. "In Mark that event is the *Parousia*. In Luke–Acts it is the sending of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8; 2:32-33). This gift is an important aspect for the fulfilment of the eschatological promises; in fact, it is referred to as 'the promise' (Acts 1:4; 2:39)." <sup>20</sup>

The hope-filled waiting for the son of man in Mark and presence of risen Lord experienced in early Christian community in Mathew and Luke (Mt 18:20, 20:20, Lk 24) are centred around the event of Jesus' resurrection. "The Emmaus story suggests that this presence is perceived especially when the community gathers for its common meal." <sup>21</sup> Stress on ethical and personal conversion, as regards the eschatological expectation, is evident not only in the call for repentance (Mk 1:14) but also in the words "not every one who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father in heaven." (Mt 7:21; Lk 16:46) The final judgement day will see the evildoers thrown

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<sup>20</sup> COLLINS, *Eschatology and Apocalypticism*, 1360

<sup>21</sup> COLLINS, *Eschatology and Apocalypticism*, 1360



into hell fire and the righteous shine like the sun in the Kingdom of the Father (see Mt 13: 41-43).<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3. Eschatology in the Gospel of John

The ambience of Johannine eschatology is largely of 'already' than the 'not yet'. The believer already experiences salvation, the object of hope. Eternal life (Jn 3:36), judgement (Jn 3:18), resurrection (Jn 5:21), all are realised in the incarnate word. Thus the emphasis is on the person of Jesus and the post-resurrectional life of the Christian community.<sup>23</sup> The futuristic hope of 'not yet' is expressed in the understanding of the movement of the history under God's providence to an ultimate end. So also there will be a final day of judgement confirming what has already taken place (Jn 12:48). A bipolarity between the world above and the world below, eternal and temporal, goes hand in hand with the tension contained in an already not yet eschatology.

### 1.4. Eschatology in Pauline Writings

The object of hope for Paul is resurrection and a life sharing the glory of Christ (Col 3:4, 1Cor 15:49) or being with the Lord forever (1Thes 4:17). This hope is also cosmic, shared by the whole creation, "that creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:18). Paul speaks of the human destiny as conforming to the image of the Son of God (Rom 8:20) who is the image of God (Col 1:15).<sup>24</sup> In 1Cor15, the main Pauline text on resurrection<sup>25</sup> too, we find the person of Christ as the central source of hope because the vital union with Christ is imperative for one's resurrection (1Cor 15:20-23).

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<sup>22</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 111

<sup>23</sup> COLLINS, *Eschatology and Apocalypticism*, 1360

<sup>24</sup> It is perhaps this Pauline view that later the Eastern tradition took up and developed as Deification in Christ, the keynote of its eschatology.

<sup>25</sup> See BERMEJO, *Eschatology*, 71

The ethical context of the individuals and the communitarian dimension of hope is also stressed (Col 3:12-17). As part and parcel of Paul's baptismal theology is seen the realised eschatology. He holds that through baptism the Christians not only express their hope in resurrection but also participate in the eschatological reality and this should become a lived reality in their lives (Rom 6, 2Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15).

What God has done in Jesus and what happens to the faithful make up the 'already of hope.' What is to be accomplished, the future is the fullest fruit of resurrection of which the Spirit is given as the guarantee (2Cor 5:1-6). Thus, "the Christological and the Pneumatic dimensions of the resurrection are closely interlocked."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, we understand the transformed future standing in continuity and in discontinuity with the present, eluding conceivability apart from faith—as a mystery. The maximum that may be said of the eschatological life is that, it is a miraculous event brought about by God as He wills it, just as He causes the crops to grow (1Cor 15:38)<sup>27</sup>. Thus, we find the Pauline eschatology as well as Pauline Theology of Hope above all Theo-logical<sup>28</sup>, that is, having God as its origin, primary agent and the end.

In the New Testament understanding, resurrection indeed stands as the key event that connects the paschal event and final human destiny. The link made by authors of the New Testament, especially by Paul, between Christ's resurrection and resurrection of the Christian at the last day was later taken up and elaborated by the fathers of the Church. In other words, it paved the basis for the later eschatological developments.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.5. Eschatology in the Eucharistic Liturgy

The posture that a Malankarite assumes during liturgical prayers, standing facing the east, is itself expressive of the

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<sup>26</sup> BERMEJO, *Eschatology*, 74

<sup>27</sup> See KATTACKAL, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 164; WITHERINGTON III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 184 -199

<sup>28</sup> See BERMEJO, *Eschatology*, 9

<sup>29</sup> MARTIN, *Eschatology*, 524

eschatological hope.<sup>30</sup> S/he stands rejoicing in the resurrection of our Lord and awaits hopefully his second coming, from the east. "More than any other, the Syrian liturgy is directed towards the last things intent on the second coming of Christ, which is already with us through sacraments. In the liturgy the historical and eschatological dimensions of the divine economy are joined"<sup>31</sup>. Only the text of Eucharistic liturgy is analysed to understand the Eschatological perspectives of Malankara Catholic Church. The oldest and the commonly used Anaphora of St. James and the Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles are the two texts studied in this paper.

### 1.5.1. The Offertory Prayer

The prayer of offertory commemorates each member of the eschatological community<sup>32</sup> so that they all may be sharers in the effect of the celebration of the whole of salvation history. The dead, therefore, are considered as part of the Church. When the *Qurbono* is specially offered for the dead, the priest prays; "O, God grant rest and refreshment in your abodes of light with all those who have done your will..."<sup>33</sup> Here we get a notion of the future glory hoped for and also the norms for attaining it.

### 1.5.2. Prayer of Absolution

The priest prays for pardon of sins not only of the living but also of the dead expressing the hope that their sins also may be forgiven. "Remember us, Lord, in your mercy and the souls of our fathers and brothers and masters and teachers, our dead and all the faithful departed, children of the holy and glorious Church. Give rest, Lord God, to their souls and bodies and shed the dew of your mercy and compassion on their bones."<sup>34</sup> Here once again we find the Church being understood as the eschatological community. The

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<sup>30</sup> PANICKER, *The Holy Qurbono*, 15

<sup>31</sup> PANICKER, *The Holy Qurbono*, 9

<sup>32</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 9

<sup>33</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 10

<sup>34</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 21



concluding sentence, “We will offer you praise and thanksgiving, now and always and for ever”<sup>35</sup> points to the nature of ‘life everlasting’. It also indicates that the life hoped for is a continuation of the life on earth.

### 1.5.3. Prefatory Dialogue

During the prefatory dialogue of the words of institution the priest and people sing Holy, holy, holy, symbolizing the heavenly choir that always praise God (Is 6:3a) and brings out the eschatological dimensions of the pilgrim Church. Gratefully remembering the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and looking forward to his second coming, the Church exclaims, “Blessed is He that has come and is to come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.”<sup>36</sup> The Church has to praise his name here on earth and at his second coming we will continue the praising in our eternal home.

### 1.5.4. The Consecration

The words of institution ends with the expression, “... given for the remission of sins and for life eternal.”<sup>37</sup> The value of the Eucharist is clearly spoken of, that participation in it leads the believer to the eternal life.

### 1.5.5. The Anamnesis

The words of Christ are remembered, “Do this in remembrance of me... until I come”<sup>38</sup>. “The priest and the people together recall the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ which is made present in all its saving power, while they look forward to the second coming of Christ, for which this mystery

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<sup>35</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 21

<sup>36</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro -Malankara Church*, 28

<sup>37</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 29

<sup>38</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 29

prepares them. In this mystery both past and future are brought near through the presence of Christ in person among his people.”<sup>39</sup>

After the Anamnesis the priest transfers the spoon from the left side to his right side. “This is to remind the faithful of the Lord’s second coming which will be like a flash of lightning”<sup>40</sup> “The change of place symbolizes the change from the seat of mercy to the throne of final judgement.”<sup>41</sup> The people proclaim their faith in Jesus’ redemptive work as well as their eschatological hope. “Your death, Lord, We commemorate, Your resurrection we confess, and your second coming we look for. May your blessings be up on us all.”<sup>42</sup> The Church acknowledges and rejoices in the redemption, which is achieved by Christ’s death and resurrection. She tries to proclaim it here and now, through her praises; confesses his resurrection in their life. They hopefully and joyously wait for the second coming.

#### 1.5.6. Intercessory Prayers

There are three intercessory prayers for the living, and three for the dead. “The Church believes that the faithful departed are present in the Holy mass along with the living faithful.”<sup>43</sup> The Church stands as an eschatological community. The living and the dead strive together, together they grow by helping each other, and together they enjoy in their own way the peace, and happiness of the risen Lord. This is clear from the silent prayer of the priest after the sixth canon. “Remember Lord, the faithful departed who have preceded us in their journey towards you. Accept this offering and give them rest in the blessed bosom of Abraham”.<sup>44</sup> They have just preceded us and we are destined to follow the same path. At the destination the entire being of humans get rest and to

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<sup>39</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 77

<sup>40</sup> RAJAN, *Queen of the Sacraments*, 101

<sup>41</sup> PANICKER, *The Holy Qurbano*, 59

<sup>42</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 29

<sup>43</sup> RAJAN, *Queen of the Sacraments*, 140

<sup>44</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 58

them is vouchsafed the delight where the light of the Lord's countenance shines.<sup>45</sup>

The second-last prayer of the anaphora proper (of the Anaphora of the Twelve apostles) brings out the idea that Christ is the source of mercy and forgiveness and through him we inherit the Kingdom of God.

O God, to whom worship is due from all our departed ones, abides in their hope in you, and look forward to your mercy. Make them worthy to hear the life-giving voice inviting them to your kingdom. By your grace grant us peaceful ends. In your mercy blot out our offences, for your son alone has appeared sinless on earth. Through him we hope to find mercy and forgiveness of sins for his sake, both for them and for ourselves.<sup>46</sup>

The Church accepts the fact that she is not worthy to inherit this life and surrenders herself to the mercy of God.

### 5.7. Service of Fraction

During the service of fraction the priest remembers the value of the death and resurrection of Jesus. He concludes the service with a prayer that expresses the hope of attaining eternal life. "Pardon our offences and forgive our sins and set us on your right hand."<sup>47</sup>

### 5.8. The *Kukilion*<sup>48</sup> of the Dead

In the *Kukilion* of the dead, the community of faithful prays for the dead, remembers the transitory nature of earthly life and tries to find hope in the Lord. The death of the baptized is only a sleep since the Lord will come and raise them to paradise. "May the dead who have slept in your hope and under the protection of

<sup>45</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 35

<sup>46</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 58

<sup>47</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 37

<sup>48</sup> *Kukilion* is the prayer of commemoration in the Malankara liturgy.



your compassion, be raised by your living voice from the grave to paradise Christ the king who gives life descends from the heights and gives life to the dead and raises up those in the grave. The dead shall offer praise to him who raises the dead.”<sup>49</sup>

In the second stanza, the community tries to gain hope and strength from the promise of our Lord: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day”.<sup>50</sup> This reminds the people of the value of the Eucharist in attaining eternal life. In the *bovootho*, the community asks God to grant the grace that he gave to the thief on Golgotha to the faithful departed also. In the second one the faithful ask God to raise them from the dust that they may praise him.

At this instance the eschatological hope is symbolically expressed. “The veil is then pulled across the sanctuary to symbolize the age in which the Church awaits the second coming of the Lord. The congregation awaits for the second coming of the Lord and in the hope of the resurrection of the departed.”<sup>51</sup>

When the priest receives communion he says the following prayer: “Grant us, Lord God, to eat your holy body and to drink your propitiatory blood, that we may be inheritors of your heavenly kingdom, with all those who have pleased your will our lord and our God for ever”.<sup>52</sup> Those who receive his body and blood will be inheritors of his heavenly Kingdom.

### 1.5.9. The Procession of the Mysteries

The procession of mysteries is traditionally seen as representing the second coming of Jesus Christ. “The priest then proceeds west in a procession which signifies the anticipated second coming of our Lord (from the East).”<sup>53</sup> The prayer, “from your propitiatory altar may pardon come down upon your servants,

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<sup>49</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 41

<sup>50</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 42

<sup>51</sup> RAJAN, *Queen of the Sacraments*, 164

<sup>52</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 42

<sup>53</sup> RAJAN, *Queen of the Sacraments*, 164

son of God, who came for our salvation and will come for our resurrection and renewal of our race for ever”<sup>54</sup> expresses the faith of the Church in the eschatological second coming of Jesus Christ. The procession returns to the sanctuary, “to show that the elect will be taken by Christ to his Father’s house (Jn14:3) after the judgement.”<sup>55</sup>

### 5.10. The Communion

“The holy Eucharist is a token of the new life of the resurrection and is called by the fathers the ‘medicine’ and ‘gift’ of immortality. The *Qurbono* is considered as a sacred banquet which prepares us for the day when we shall share the banquet with Christ in the heavenly kingdom.”<sup>56</sup> The priest conveys this to the faithful when he says while distributing the communion, “the propitiatory live-coal of the body and blood of Jesus is given to the believer, for the pardon of offences and the forgiveness of sins and for eternal life.”<sup>57</sup>

### 5.11. The Thanksgiving

There are two prayers of Thanksgiving, the first addressed to God the Father giving thanks for the divine gift of the Body and blood of Christ; the second addressed to Christ asking for his mercy at the time of his second coming. Thus the *Qurbono* concludes by looking forward to the second coming of the Christ and the eschatological freedom.<sup>58</sup> The following comment articulates the comprehensiveness of the experience of Christian hope in the Eucharistic liturgy and its Christo-centricity; “We have shared in the mystery of his life and death and resurrection, his ascension and his gift of the Holy spirit and now we look forward

<sup>54</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 42

<sup>55</sup> PANICKER, *The Holy Qurbono*, 67

<sup>56</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 78

<sup>57</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 43

<sup>58</sup> The second prayer of thanks giving in the Anaphora of Twelve apostles goes as follows, “O God of our salvation, you became man for us and by the offering of your sacrifice you set us free... for we are your people and inheritance.” (*The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 68)

to his second coming, seeking to be so conformed to his likeness that he may live in us and we in him.”<sup>59</sup>

### 1. 5. 12. The Final Blessing

The priest blesses the people and says that the *Qurbono* will give rest to the souls of the faithful departed.<sup>60</sup> It also expresses the Malankarites’ understanding of the Eucharist as “food for the journey” (provision - *Vazhiyathrakkulla Bhakshanam*)<sup>61</sup>. Man is considered as a sojourner in this world and Christ’s body and blood accompanies him to reach his goal, which is the life after death. “The formula of final blessing and dismissal as well as the ritual of farewell to the altar imply the immediacy of parousia and the hope of meeting again in the eschatological Kingdom of God”<sup>62</sup>

The concluding hymn sung by the people is filled with the understanding of the eschatological efficaciousness of the Eucharist. The Church again and again remembers the eternal life that is to come and asks God to have mercy on her on the day of his coming. She finds happiness in the fact that the body and blood of the Jesus can help her to receive a good reward on that day.

## 1.6. Patristic Eschatology of the Orient

This section is a brief study of the eschatology of four oriental fathers, namely, Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Ephraim the Syrian (Mar Ephrem) and Aphrahat. The first two belong to the Greek Orient. The other two are Syrian luminaries.

### 1.6.1. Gregory of Nazianzen

According to Gregory of Nazianzen, death puts an end to the transient and transitory life and dissolves the human existence,

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<sup>59</sup> *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 79

<sup>60</sup> See *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 45

<sup>61</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Qurbana*, 9; See *The Divine Liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Church*, 45

<sup>62</sup> PANICKER, *The Holy Qurbono*, 70



which flourishes like the grass and flowers of the field.<sup>63</sup> The soul of God-beloved rejoices as it is freed from the bondages of the body. However within a short while it will closely unite with the kindred flesh, which shared with it in the pursuits of things above, to share in the inheritance of glory. Only God knows the way of this re-union<sup>64</sup>.

The last day is described as the day of “the last trumpet, the transformation of the heavens, the transfiguration of the earth, the liberation of the elements, the renovation of the universe.”<sup>65</sup> This is the day of visitation a call to account for the image.<sup>66</sup> All will resurrect. For those who have done evil it is resurrection of judgement.<sup>67</sup> They are self-condemned and self-convicted.<sup>68</sup> Through their unbelief the ungodly are punished<sup>69</sup> and they enter into the darkness prepared for them.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand those who have done good are hidden in Christ in the resurrection of life.<sup>71</sup> They will be welcomed by “unspeakable light and the vision of the holy and royal trinity, which now shines upon them with greater brilliancy and purity and unites itself wholly to the whole soul, in which solely and beyond all else the kingdom of heaven exists.”<sup>72</sup> There is one heaven that is common to all,<sup>73</sup> which is our home, the place of bliss, where we shall be with our master.<sup>74</sup> It is “Jerusalem above, the object, not of sight but of contemplation, wherein is our commonwealth, and where to we are pressing on; whose citizen Christ is and whose fellow citizens are the assembly and Church of the firstborn who are written in heaven.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> NAZIANZEN, *Panegyric on Caesarius*, 19

<sup>64</sup> NAZIANZEN, *Panegyric on Caesarius*, 21

<sup>65</sup> NAZIANZEN, *Panegyric on Caesarius*, 21

<sup>66</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Silence*, 8

<sup>67</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Silence*, 9

<sup>68</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Silence*, 8

<sup>69</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Silence*, 5

<sup>70</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Silence*, 9

<sup>71</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Silence*, 9

<sup>72</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Silence*, 9

<sup>73</sup> NAZIANZEN, *Against the Arians*, IX

<sup>74</sup> NAZIANZEN, *On his Father's Death*, 3

<sup>75</sup> NAZIANZEN, *Funeral Oration on Gorgonia*, 6

### 1.6.2. Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa exhorted the believers to believe in Resurrection. "Resurrection is the reconstitution of our nature in its original form."<sup>76</sup> The only condition for resurrection is that one should have lived by being born. Death is a dissolution and Resurrection a repair.<sup>77</sup> All will be raised up at a time when God decides to arrive at His end. "His end is one, and only one; it is this: when the complete whole of our race shall have been perfected from first man to the last."<sup>78</sup> All must be cleansed for this; the virtuous in this life and the vice afterwards by the Fire. At the attainment of perfection all are offered participation in every good in God, which means to be in God himself. This is the blessed state, the pristine state of grace.<sup>79</sup> The difference between the good and the bad lies in the intervening time between the Resurrection and the *Apokatastasis*.<sup>80</sup> Thus all the humans will be restored in their original state as Images of God.

### 1.6.3. Aphrahat, the Persian Sage

Aphrahat argues that all our Fathers (of the Biblical tradition) looked forward to Resurrection.<sup>81</sup> Till the day of resurrection, the dead sleep without knowing good from evil.<sup>82</sup> On the day of judgement the righteous shall inherit the kingdom promised.<sup>83</sup> The wicked will suffer second death and enter into darkness.<sup>84</sup>

### 1.6.4. Ephraim, the Syrian

In the understanding of Mar Ephraim, the death and the satan are conquered in Christ's resurrection. In death the image of Adam

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<sup>76</sup> NYSSA, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 464

<sup>77</sup> NYSSA, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 464

<sup>78</sup> NYSSA, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 465

<sup>79</sup> NYSSA, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 467

<sup>80</sup> NYSSA, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 468

<sup>81</sup> APHRAHAT, *Demonstrations*, 7

<sup>82</sup> APHRAHAT, *Demonstrations*, 20

<sup>83</sup> APHRAHAT, *Demonstrations*, 22

<sup>84</sup> APHRAHAT, *Demonstrations*, 19



is committed to earth till the resurrection.<sup>85</sup> The great day will be a day of joy for those at the Lord's right hand. The one who has died and is alive (Christ) will give life and resurrection unto all.<sup>86</sup> It is trust in God that sustains the Christians' hope of attaining resurrection from the depths of *Sheol*. That is why he implored, "work for me then the resurrection that is of Thy mercy; and even though Thy permit not, let there be occasion for Thy grace. This only let it remember for me, that in it I have sought refuge."<sup>87</sup> The souls of the evil are to be afflicted till the judgement day. In *Sheol* the wretched shall repent without avail.<sup>88</sup> He speaks of *gehanna* as the place of the Evil one.<sup>89</sup>

To sum, up the deliberation so far done under this heading has indicated that Christian eschatology has metamorphosed from being theology of last things to the Theology of Hope. The trust in the steadfastness of 'God who shall fulfil His promise' indeed formed the foundation of the Old Testament Theology of Hope. It was a communitarian eschatology when compared to some of the later New Testament and early Christian eschatology. The concept of resurrection, which originated in the later Old Testament texts, reached further development in the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus became the fulcrum of the Theology of Hope of whole New Testament and later Christian tradition. High stress is laid on human ethical conduct in both traditions. The transformation of human persons and human situations were considered a prerequisite for the dawn of the Kingdom of God.

The Church, both as the mystical body of Christ as well as the community of chosen ones, claimed for her the title Kingdom of God. Of course there were at times over emphasis on an otherworldly eschatology, which was too much world negating.<sup>90</sup> However, the Christian Theology of Hope indeed gives due importance to the present world and time. At the same time, true to

<sup>85</sup> EPHRAIM, *Nisibene Hymns*, LXV-1

<sup>86</sup> EPHRAIM, *Nisibene Hymns*, XXXVI-18

<sup>87</sup> EPHRAIM, *Nisibene Hymns*, XXXVIII-11

<sup>88</sup> EPHRAIM, *Nisibene Hymns*, LXIV-9

<sup>89</sup> EPHRAIM, *Nisibene Hymns*, LXVIII-30

<sup>90</sup> See CHANDRANKUNNEL, *In Search of a Holistic Eschatology*, 44



the spirit of 'the already not yet' characteristic of Christian Theology of Hope, it is futuristic too. In the biblical and liturgical traditions resurrection, second coming of Jesus Christ, judgment, *Parousia*, etc. are the key eschatological themes. What is common to all these are a sense of being with God. In all these we find the Christian hope as 'fulfilled but yet to be fulfilled' and the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, occupies centrality. It is all these traditions that have formed the milieu within which Mar Ivanios' eschatological vision took shape.

## 2. Mar Ivanian Theology of Hope

The passages that come under this topic intend to delve deep exclusively into the Theology of Hope of Mar Ivanios. Having presented the probable roots as well as influences of Mar Ivanios' Eschatology, the search now orients towards comprehending his eschatological insight. First I would try to clarify how *eschaton* was understood by Mar Ivanios. Since *eschaton* is almost synonymous with the dawn of the Kingdom of God, it has Theological, Christological, Soteriological, Ecclesial, Anthropological and Cosmic implications. Mar Ivanian vision of religious life is encumbered with Eschatological overtones and this too will be briefly looked into. Mar Ivanios' idea regarding traditional 'last things' namely death, resurrection, judgement, Christ's second coming etc also will be presented. Various statements related to these subjects will be culled out and put together in a framework in order that a somewhat vivid picture is obtained. The contemporary Catholic Theology of Hope is briefly presented in the footnotes, in whose light we can understand not only the catholicity of Mar Ivanian vision but also its farsightedness, in anticipating the Vatican II insights on the Christian hope that finds expression in the Creed.

### 2.1. *Eschaton*: the Human Destiny

*Eschaton*, as it is generally understood, is not only "the end but also the fulfilment of God's vision and kingdom."<sup>91</sup> In other

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<sup>91</sup> TSIRPANLIS, *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought*, 6

words, “it is the fulfilment of God’s dominion.”<sup>92</sup> For the oriental mind, fulfilment of God’s dominion coincides with the final deification of created beings. Therefore, “eschatology can only begin at the end. But this end is not a static terminus, a limit; it is the continually renewed beginning of an infinite way of deifying union, in which the dominion of God and the vocation of creation is fulfilled.”<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, Mar Ivanios also considered *eschaton* as the destiny of human being. “Man is created by God in His image and likeness to live in the heavenly kingdom with God.”<sup>94</sup> He asserts further, “God is not only my creator and master, and he is my last end and final ambition.”<sup>95</sup> The destiny of human life is God, who is love. One attains this when s/he becomes perfect in love towards God, and towards humans for God.<sup>96</sup>

The destiny of humans is not something that they decide for themselves. “God calls humans towards this destiny and help them through His grace.”<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, this divine initiative does not render the humans passive. “Humans attain this destiny through the path of love.”<sup>98</sup> S/he should strive to attain total love of God and perfection to reach the goal for this s/he ought to follow Jesus by accomplishing what he taught by words and deeds.<sup>99</sup>

Christification and deification are not something exclusive to religious, excluding the common man. Expressing this idea in clear terms, Mar Ivanios wrote to the faithful in the pastoral letter from his sick bed, “Reflect Jesus in your lives. Each one should try the best to get transformed into another Christ.”<sup>100</sup> Thus *eschaton* is presented as the common destiny of all.

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<sup>92</sup> LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 212

<sup>93</sup> LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 224

<sup>94</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Pastoral Letter*, January 1942

<sup>95</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 20

<sup>96</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 9

<sup>97</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 9

<sup>98</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 9

<sup>99</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 10

<sup>100</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Pastoral Letter*, 21 September 1952, 14

## 2.2. Christological and Soteriological Dimensions

In Mar Ivanios' eschatological vision the total person of Jesus Christ occupies a central position. "It is through the divinity of the incarnate Messiah the humans enter into the divinity. The means to enter into his divinity is his humanity."<sup>101</sup> The whole initiative to unite humans with God through Christ comes from God, the father. "Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect human. His humanity is the means that God has given us to get united with divinity."<sup>102</sup> Mar Ivanios asserts this idea when he speaks of the nature of human resurrection and the means to attain it.

Incarnation is the means that God has given us so that our body and soul unite with God in resurrection as well as in this life. What we ought to do in order that our soul and body (i.e. Our entirety) may unite with God, not only in this life, after death and resurrection but always, is to remain united with the body and soul of Jesus Christ, who was man and God. Union of either the body or the soul is not enough.<sup>103</sup>

## 2.3. Ecclesial and Sacramental Aspects of Eschatology

The Church, the mystical body of Christ, enjoys a key role in Mar Ivanian eschatology. Church is the earthly agent that enables ones union with Christ and God. "According to the promise 'I shall be with you till the end of the world', he lives among us with his resurrected body. His body is in the world as Church. We unite with him by remaining united with Church, which is his body."<sup>104</sup> To bring about this eschatological union the Church has sacraments as efficacious instruments. "Materially and spiritually we have to receive the body and spirit of Jesus Christ. For this we have means, which our Lord himself has given. We call them mysteries or sacraments."<sup>105</sup> Mar Ivanios attached special significance in this regard to the sacrament of Eucharist. "To unite

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<sup>101</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 56

<sup>102</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 57

<sup>103</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 60

<sup>104</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 61

<sup>105</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62



our body and spirit with that of Jesus Christ, he himself has given us the Holy Eucharist.”<sup>106</sup> In the peak of the eschatological experience of the Eucharistic union with Jesus Christ, Mar Ivanios prayed; “Oh Jesus, who loves me, I believe that you are in me now. You have come to abide in my body and soul, although you are the Lord of heaven and earth. Oh Lord, how great is your love for me.”<sup>107</sup> The efficacy of sacraments, therefore, is in providing divine union to the faithful. The union attained is not merely mental but real.<sup>108</sup>

Mar Ivanios was quite convinced that the Church is the eschatological community where exists the communion of the living and the dead. “Peter desired to make three tents; one for our Lord, one for Moses and one for Elijah and to live with them. That which Peter could not attain - communion with the saints who are gone from this world – God has made possible for us through the Holy Church.”<sup>109</sup> This understanding served as a motivating force of his reunion. Mar Ivanios said “I craved for the heavenly joy of communion with them (Sts. Ignatius Loyola, Francis Assisi. Francis de sales etc.)... so that I may become their own child and be in the fullest communion with them in the mother Church.”<sup>110</sup> He drew parallels between the Church and the Johannine ‘New Heaven’ and called her “the only worldly institution that provides heavenly experience to the earthly inhabitants here itself.”<sup>111</sup> He was assertive of the role of the Church in enabling humans enjoy lasting peace, the characteristic of *eschaton*. He looked forward for the eschatological communion here in the Church and here after in the Heaven.

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<sup>106</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

<sup>107</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Kumpasāram*, 108

<sup>108</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 62

<sup>109</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sabhavatsaram*, 67

<sup>110</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary Celebration*, 4

<sup>111</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 30-31

## 2.4. Cosmic and Anthropological Aspects of Eschatology

Mar Ivanios held the view that the whole creation will reach back to God at the end and he termed this reaching back as 'bliss'. He defined the 'groaning of the whole creation as if in birth pangs' (Rom 8:22, the famous text in Pauline eschatology) as a process of evolution in the preparation to reach at the final goal.<sup>112</sup> "By both, the scientific theory of evolution and the eternal truths of divine religions, human being is the high point in creation. Man is the representative of whole creation. Therefore when humans reach God the whole creation will reach God through him."<sup>113</sup> This brings out the cosmological and anthropological content of the final bliss. It is through detachment, service of God and proper use of created things for the service of God one should strive in this life to achieve this goal.<sup>114</sup> The creatures on the other hand teach humans to know, love and serve God and thus enable them to attain the eternal destiny.<sup>115</sup>

## 2.5. Eschatological Dimension of Monastic Life

Mar Ivanios considered monastic life as a foretaste of heavenly life. To experience the heavenly bliss "we should give us entirely to God and dedicate our lives for the brethren, being filled with the same love with which Jesus Christ has loved us. We have to lead a life of perfect charity."<sup>116</sup> Vows are the means that enable a religious to attain this.

Through the vow of poverty, we are freed from those things considered as good in this transitory world. The whole power to desire, whole desire and effort to attain are freely let loose for the prime goal, that is, God himself. By living in the true spirit of

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<sup>112</sup> See INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 53

<sup>113</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 55

<sup>114</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 74

<sup>115</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 30-31

<sup>116</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 122

poverty, we set our hearts on heavenly things that are at the right side of God, where Jesus Christ sits. We have thus begun to participate in our heavenly share. We have already entered into that.<sup>117</sup>

Similar effect is brought forth by the vow of chastity by enabling one to share in the glory of Christ. “The glory that was shone at transfiguration; the one our Lord attained through suffering on the cross and resurrection, in it the religious partake through the oblation of the vow of chastity.”<sup>118</sup> He further explains, “Jesus transfigured through offering his body, soul, life and self to the Father in its entirety. Through the dedication the religious share in the offering as well as glory of Jesus Christ.”<sup>119</sup> The vows enable the religious to live with Jesus Christ in the bosom of the Father.<sup>120</sup> It is in such a state of sharing one’s whole being with Jesus Christ s/he can pray, “Jesus you are my hope, you are my consolation, you are my peace. In this world and in the one to come you are my eternal bliss.”<sup>121</sup> In other words, Jesus becomes both the destiny and hope of the religious.

### 2.5.1. Religious House as *Pardaiso*

Mar Ivanios considered the religious house as *Pardaiso* (the Paradise). The key concepts of his eschatology, especially its ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ characteristics are evident in this ‘paradise’ concept. Writing about the cell (*tauna*- the personal room) of a religious, Mar Ivanios writes, “In the cell (*tauna*) the religious lives with Jesus Christ. Every thing that he does; prayer, work, rest, silence etc. are in relation with God. It is the holy place.”<sup>122</sup> It is also a part of heaven that God has brought down on earth for the religious to abide. Here he relates it with the Holy Trinity, the holy

<sup>117</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 122

<sup>118</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 125

<sup>119</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 125

<sup>120</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 111

<sup>121</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 144

<sup>122</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 49



mother of God, the saints and the angels. The religious who properly resides in the cell lives in heaven. He is a citizen of heaven.<sup>123</sup> Mar Ivanios stresses the 'not yet' aspect by quoting Eph 2:19-22. Yet another reason that Mar Ivanios gives to consider the *tauna* as paradise is that the religious remains here in divine love.<sup>124</sup> At the same time, this is not a passive state but an active state where "the religious practises deeds of faith and charity as well as consistency of hope"<sup>125</sup>

The life in community is yet another aspect that gives religious life a foretaste of the life to come: "Remember that you are living with the saints of God in the heavenly kingdom. Here begins that life in which you serve and glorify the Holy Trinity, accompanied by the angels and saints in heaven. Try to attain that life of holiness, glory and perfect charity here, in this *tauna*."<sup>126</sup> Religious house is the place where God is the master. Our Lord resides and rules in the hearts of each one who lives there and is glorified.<sup>127</sup> The place where the Lord resides is the heaven. The holiness and light of the Lord fills the *tauna*.<sup>128</sup> By residing in the protection of the cross in the *tauna* the religious shares in the eschatological experience of the crucified Christ.<sup>129</sup>

The religious experience Christ in and through the Church, not only because they are the true children of the Church,<sup>130</sup> but also because the religious community is the Holy Church within the Holy Church, the heart of the Church.<sup>131</sup> Religious community is formed into an eschatological family by our Lord similar to the

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<sup>123</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 49

<sup>124</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 51

<sup>125</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 49

<sup>126</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 52

<sup>127</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 67

<sup>128</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 54

<sup>129</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 57

<sup>130</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 15

<sup>131</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 18

one that was formed by him of the Apostles.<sup>132</sup> The rule of life of this community is the will of God the Father<sup>133</sup> and the supreme norm is charity.<sup>134</sup> When the religious die to the self and give themselves in love with great enthusiasm to please our Lord,<sup>135</sup> their residence becomes a true family of our Lord.<sup>136</sup> The characteristics of such a family are Christian unity, peace and loving trust.<sup>137</sup> However, this is not yet a fulfilled reality, may not even get fulfilled in this life,<sup>138</sup> still we trust in the faithfulness of God and hope that he shall build up a religious community that is perfected in virtues for his glory.<sup>139</sup> God is powerful enough to bring his plan to fulfilment through whomever he likes and it is he who calls people to religious life. He is the architect and builder of the religious community. The only thing that the religious ought to do is to live faithful to his/her commitment.<sup>140</sup> The hope therefore once again becomes active in faith and charity.

## 2.6. On Death<sup>141</sup>

Mar Ivanios did not consider death as a frightening reality. It is the moment when one attains lasting peace, about which God only knows.<sup>142</sup> “It is only sin that makes death frightening.”<sup>143</sup>

<sup>132</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 64

<sup>133</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 88, 128

<sup>134</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 64, 65

<sup>135</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 69

<sup>136</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 70

<sup>137</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 70

<sup>138</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 132, 133

<sup>139</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 133

<sup>140</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 133

<sup>141</sup> For the Church death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy, which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny (CCC 1013). Though it is a consequence of sin (CCC1008), Christ has transformed its curse to blessing through his obedience (CCC 1009). Therefore, for a Christian, death has a positive meaning, that in death God calls one to himself and s/he can transform his/her death to an act of obedience and love to the Father, as Christ did (CCC 1011).

<sup>142</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 110

<sup>143</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 99

“You shall not fear death if you have a pristine conscience.”<sup>144</sup> Mar Ivanios would suggest that, “you should always expect death. By this you can save yourself from many dangers.”<sup>145</sup> The dangers that he refers to are the sins. The effect of such expectation is eschatological. “Then you can begin to live with Jesus... you can reach him without any hurdles.”<sup>146</sup> The faithful can have a reverential fear about death in order that it may motivate them to live righteously. It is in this state of righteousness that God wants to encounter us at the moment of death.<sup>147</sup>

Mar Ivanios considered death not as an end but as a transitory phase. For him death is a Jordan that is to be crossed over,<sup>148</sup> in ones journey towards the Promised Land. For the righteous, it is a passage into the eternal abode, where saints will receive him/her.<sup>149</sup> He was sure that heaven awaited him at his death and therefore promised to pray before God for the reunion of the non-Catholic brethren.<sup>150</sup>

The prayer that he made standing in front of his would-be-tomb shows that he considered death only as a passing phase. “Oh, little abode for my rest, let me step into you peacefully. Let me also wake up from you with eternal happiness.”<sup>151</sup> As T. Inchackalody rightly observes this prayer was “an explicit expression of the true spirit of Christian hope and prayer.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 96

<sup>145</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 98

<sup>146</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 98

<sup>147</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 99

<sup>148</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter, dated 21 September 1952

<sup>149</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 99

<sup>150</sup> See THOMAS, *Mahātmāvāya Mar Ivanios*, 68

<sup>151</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 339

<sup>152</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 339



## 2.7. On Resurrection<sup>153</sup>

Mar Ivanios firmly believed in resurrection and considered the resurrection of Jesus as the firm basis for this faith. "Since Jesus Christ has risen, we also can be sure of our resurrection and a life after. Also, this goes along with the scriptural notion that the whole creation is striving for union with God"<sup>154</sup> In his view, resurrection of human beings is quite conceivable from scientific perspective also. It is indeed an imperative. "According to the theory of evolution that is being popularly accepted in all sciences, it is imperative that humans also should evolve into a higher state of being."<sup>155</sup> In this natural process of evolution, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is significant because "from the resurrection of Jesus it becomes clear that this higher state gets purified by resurrection."<sup>156</sup>

Mar Ivanios understood the human being as a totality and therefore believed in the resurrection of the total human person. "It is neither our body (alone) nor our soul (alone) that will resurrect. We shall rise as a whole, both body and soul, and get united with God."<sup>157</sup> Resurrection therefore is not an end in itself. It is a

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<sup>153</sup> The Church firmly believes and hence hopes that after death, the righteous will live forever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day. This, like Christ's resurrection will be the work of God, the Most Holy Trinity (CCC 989). Hope in the bodily resurrection of the dead is a consequence intrinsic to the faith in God, who is the creator of the whole man, soul and body; and who is faithful to His promises (CCC 992). Resurrection is God granting incorruptible life to the bodies in their reunion with souls after death and decay, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection (CCC 997). All the dead will rise, the virtuous to life and the vice to the judgement (CCC 998). Christ will change our bodies like his glorious body (CCC 999). This experience is not one that happens on 'the last day', 'at the end of the world' when Christ's *Parousia* arrives (CCC 1011). By virtue of the union attained with Christ through baptism, believers already participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ (CCC 1003). Participation in the Eucharist gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies (CCC 1000). A believer, as a witness to Christ, is ought to experience the risen Christ and bear witness to his resurrection (CCC 995).

<sup>154</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 59

<sup>155</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 60

<sup>156</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 60

<sup>157</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 60

transformed state that facilitates the eschatological union with God. Jesus Christ mediates the process that begins in this world. “We shall accomplish the merits required for this glorious union through the incarnate Jesus, in this life itself. Jesus Christ is the way of salvation in this world and in resurrection.”<sup>158</sup>

## 2.8. On Judgement<sup>159</sup>

Mar Ivanios indeed believed in judgment (both particular and general) and reward. “One who loves God wholeheartedly shall not fear death, punishment, judgment and hell. It is because perfect love ensures entry into God.”<sup>160</sup> He speaks of the last day as “a day of examining one’s life before the whole world.”<sup>161</sup> He believed that Jesus Christ judges each one at the moment of death. Therefore, he prayed, “supreme judge of the living and the dead, you decide our eternal state at the moment of our death. You are both our judge and saviour... your sacred wounds implore you to show mercy... We pray you to forgive our atrocities, Amen”<sup>162</sup> Mar Ivanios was convinced that charity is the criterion of judgment on the last day. He wrote, “Our Lord shall judge us on the last day depending on whether or not we have made use of the occasions that we got in this life to help and serve others.”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> INCHACKALODY, Archbishop *Mar Ivanios - I*, 60

<sup>159</sup> The Church believes that death will be followed by a particular judgement. Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgement that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven, through a purification or immediately, or immediate and everlasting damnation (CCC 1022). There will also be a universal, last judgement that precedes the resurrection of all the dead. It will take place when Christ returns in glory (CCC 1040) and in his presence. He himself is truth and the truth of each one's relationship and consequences of good or evil earthly deeds will be revealed (CCC 1039). The Last Judgement will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (CCC 1040). It calls men to conversion while God gives opportunities, to commit them to the justice of the Kingdom of God. It proclaims the blessed hope of the return of the Lord (CCC 1041).

<sup>160</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 104

<sup>161</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Kumpasāram*, 22

<sup>162</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 105

<sup>163</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Kumpasāram*, 94-95



Expectation of the life to come therefore did not turn away his attention from life in this world.

## 2. 9. On *Purgatory* and Hell<sup>164</sup>

Mar Ivanios considered purgatory as a ‘purifying fire beyond this world that destroys the sin’<sup>165</sup> He does not clearly state whether it is a place or a state. However, he pictured hell as a horrible place of suffering. “One is punished according to the matter in which s/he has greatly sinned. There the fools are pricked with red-hot iron thorns. The gluttons will be afflicted with extreme hunger and thirst. Upon the luxurious boiled coal tar and sulphur will be poured. Jealous will groan in sorrow like mad dogs.”<sup>166</sup> The imagery indeed expresses the horribility of sin and the sad state of those living away from God.

## 2. 10. On ‘the Life to Come’<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> The Church holds on to the doctrine of the reality of a final purification. All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are to undergo purification in order to enter the joy of heaven, which is assured (CCC 1030). The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned (CCC 1031). It is a passing state. ‘Hell’, according to the Church, is the state of definitive self-exclusion of one from communion with God and the blessed. One ought to live in communion with God, oneself and with others, especially taking care to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are the Lord’s brethren (CCC 1033). Failing in this is sin (CCC 1849). Hell is the result of dying in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love (CCC 1033). It is real and eternal (CCC 1035).

<sup>165</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 101

<sup>166</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 102

<sup>167</sup> The Church teaches that the universe itself will be transformed at the arrival of the eschatological ‘end time’ (CCC 1042). Going along with the scripture, the Church terms this mysterious renewal at the final consummation of the creation as the ‘new heaven and new earth’.<sup>167</sup> This new universe is the heavenly Jerusalem where God will have his dwelling among men (CCC 1044). For humans it will be the final realisation of the unity of the human race (CCC 1045). For the cosmos it is going to be the attainment of original destiny by sharing in the glorification of the children of God in the risen Christ (CCC 1047). The expectation of the “new heaven and new earth” shall not diminish the Christians’ concern to develop this earth, for such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God. It is here on this earth a new human family grows (see GS 39). Only



The heavenly city is presented as the place of “happiness, glory, eternal rest and communion of saints.”<sup>168</sup> As the book of revelation presents ‘it is the city of eternal light,’ and the saints who live there are glorious. Mar Ivanios always hoped to reach there.

### 3. Reflections on Mar Ivanian Theology of Hope

Having attempted to comprehend the eschatological vision of Mar Ivanios, we shall make an assessment of Mar Ivanian Eschatology against the contemporary Eschatology. Before dealing with any specific issues that are related to the contemporary Eschatology, some specific characteristics are taken and we will examine whether Mar Ivanios’ Theology of Hope has these hallmarks.

#### 3.1. Theo-Centricity

God-centeredness is one of the major characteristics of Christian Eschatology. “Christian hope can have no other ultimate object than God, who is manifested to us in Christ”<sup>169</sup> Mar Ivanian Theology of Hope also presents God as the ultimate destiny. We have seen how deification, both here and hereafter, is considered as the glorified end for which humans and the whole creation strive. The vocation to reach the destiny as well as the strength to strive for it is understood as provided by the grace of God.<sup>170</sup> That is why his Theology of Hope has ‘trust in God’ as its final word.<sup>171</sup>

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God who will bring it forth knows the moment of final consummation. When it happens God will be all in all in eternal life (CCC 1050).

<sup>168</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 112-115

<sup>169</sup> LADARIA, *Eschatology*, 273

<sup>170</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 117; MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 9

<sup>171</sup> The following description of Mar Ivanios about his mental disposition when the decision to start a religious community was being made, testifies his trust and hope in God. “I began to feel that my heart, that was placed before God like clay, started to attain the shape of the ideal and the beauty of the idea. I believed for sure that He would give it a form. I surrendered my heart, that was free till then. I sat aside (dispassionately). (MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60) Similar trust and hope we find as he speaks of the future of Bethany. “ I do not lose hope in

God is therefore 'all in all', the beginning and the end according to Mar Ivanian eschatology.

### 3.2. Christo-Centricity

The person of Jesus Christ holds a prime role in contemporary eschatology. This is because, "the full revelation of God has already occurred in Jesus."<sup>172</sup> In addition, "by his incarnation, God the son is one of us, Jesus the Christ. By His resurrection, Jesus Christ is the first fruit, that is, the first of all those risen from dead. In him therefore the promises of God, the promises of new life, of new heart are fulfilled"<sup>173</sup> It is perhaps because of these reasons Mar Ivanios consistently advocated 'Imitation of Christ' and 'union with Christ'. He pointed out Jesus' resurrection as the surety of our resurrection. Mar Ivanian eschatology calls Jesus Christ as the 'hope and bliss'<sup>174</sup> It is the supreme expression of its Christological orientation.

### 3.3. Soteriological Orientation

"Christian eschatology is a message of salvation."<sup>175</sup> The Mar Ivanian eschatology also proclaims the salvation/redemption as occurring as a result of participation in the Christ event. The warning to keep away from the danger of sin and the appeal to adhere to God<sup>176</sup> is actually a proclamation of the salvation. Since salvation cannot be thrust on human beings endowed with free will, rejection of grace and 'Hell' becomes a possibility. Even then it is a proclamation of salvation since it condemns nobody but appeals all to turn to God. The Church and sacraments are there to assist one to attain salvation. Above all following the will of Jesus Christ who always acted in conformity with the will of the Father

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sufferings. I am not disheartened in unhappiness. He, to whom Bethany belongs, will look after it." (MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 159)

<sup>172</sup> LADARIA, *Eschatology*, 274

<sup>173</sup> FRANCIS, *Come Lord Jesus Come*, 73

<sup>174</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 144

<sup>175</sup> LADARIA, *Eschatology*, 274

<sup>176</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 98-99

is what Mar Ivanian eschatology suggests as means of salvation (negatively) or Deification (positively).

### 3.4. The 'Already and Not Yet' Characteristics

Simultaneous assertion on 'already and not yet' is another hallmark of contemporary Christian eschatology. "Christian eschatology knows that it must assert both the already present reality of the 'last' and the future of the 'last things'."<sup>177</sup> Through this assertion contemporary eschatology "incorporates the vision of the creative presence and love of God present already in the world as well as Moltmann's concept of the consummation of everything in the future."<sup>178</sup> Integration of the present and the future is part and parcel of Mar Ivanian eschatology. Only such eschatology finds meaning in history. It is concerned with the redemption of history and the world. It lays claim to being in the tradition of the prophets and of Jesus Christ, and only such eschatology offers meaning to history. It is credible when it speaks of the new world to come.<sup>179</sup> In considering Religious house as *Pardaiso*, Jesus Christ as *eschaton* etc, it is this demand that is fulfilled. It is the 'already not yet' aspect that gives us hope. It also motivates us to strive forward into the future.<sup>180</sup>

### 3.5. An Integrated Discipline

Eschatology has overcome a major handicap of its past, of remaining closed in a territory of its own, to become a discipline interrelated with other disciplines. "Recent trends in catholic thought have meant that eschatology is now more integrated with the whole of theology and is no longer content merely with statements about a remote future."<sup>181</sup> We have seen how Mar Ivanian eschatology is an integrated discipline, related to other branches of theology like Christology, Ecclesiology, Soteriology,

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<sup>177</sup> LADARIA, *Eschatology*, 273

<sup>178</sup> CHANDRANKUNNEL, *In Search of a Holistic Eschatology*, 50

<sup>179</sup> STRAGG, *Eschatology*, 270

<sup>180</sup> Detailed explanation of the 'already not yet' character of Mar Ivanian eschatology is given in the second chapter.

<sup>181</sup> WILLIAMS, *Eschatology*, 536



Pneumatology, etc. It has also taken the scientific theory of evolution seriously. Anthropology is yet another discipline that which it duly considers. By this, it has also become a Theology of Hope that provides meaningfulness to the life on earth.

### 3.6. Mar Ivanian Eschatology and Some Enigmatic Issues

The following passages intend to look at Mar Ivanian eschatology in the light of certain approaches that, at least in the view of some scholars, divide Christian Eschatology into 'traditional' and 'modern'. Both are considered to be set against each other regarding certain issues, which I would term as the 'problematic' in this chapter. It is important to analyse whether these problematic affect Mar Ivanian eschatology.

#### 3.6.1. The 'Other Worldly' Versus 'This Worldly'

The traditional Eschatology has been accused of speaking too much about 'the pie in the sky' thus generating a spite for 'this world'. The moderners on the other hand emphasize much on 'kingdom here and now' downplaying the importance of the future that is to come. "Hope may well point to a distant corrective, but hope should offer something more here and now that that which dehumanises robs life of meaning;" <sup>182</sup> they demand impatiently. Both the approaches have their own merits and demerits. Negation of the present for the future is absurd. If the world of today has nothing to do with the world to come, the whole salvation history becomes meaningless. It is into this world that God has come and it is through this world he has revealed His love. On the other hand, if *eschatology* is a once for all finished reality of this world, then, it will remain only as a science of last things. It cannot be a Theology of Hope, for there is no place for hope in a present that rules out future.

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<sup>182</sup> STRAGG, Eschatology, 269

Mar Ivanian Eschatology keeps a proper balance between the 'already and not yet' of the *eschaton*. In its view both are not contradictory, irreconcilable opposites but complementary. It understands the accomplishment of the final destiny as a dynamic process that originates here and finds fulfilment in the world to come.

Mar Ivanios' instruction, "you live in this world like a pilgrim and a sojourner. You have no participation in the things of this world,"<sup>183</sup> is not an expression of spite for the world. It is an exaltation of the true Christian spirit of *Fuga Mundi* that facilitates proper God-human-world relationship. "Humans should relate with God in Faith. They should trust only in Divine Hope. They shall be animate by nothing but the spirit of Divine Love. It is Renunciation that guides one to this disposition."<sup>184</sup> Thus Mar Ivanios' intention becomes clear. He wanted to highlight the need of the spirit of detachment in order that one can stay away from worldly avarice and greed.

### 3.6.2. Liberative Concerns

Traditional Eschatology is sometimes accused of lacking liberative and social concerns. However, we find Mar Ivanian Eschatology sufficiently liberative as it calls all the humans to active deeds of charity. Each individual is exhorted to die to the self and offer oneself to the community. The following prayer of Mar Ivanios that looks towards the dawn of the Kingdom of God is a clear proof of the liberative as well as the futuristic orientation of his eschatology, making it a true theology of hope.

Jesus Christ, our King, teach us to serve you as it is due to you. Train us to give and restrain from striving to gain anything for ourselves. Instruct us to seek the good of others and not to seek our own well-being with selfish motives. Let us become your true children by fighting together with You against all sins. Let us combat injustice, ignorance, illness and misery. Thus, let us

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<sup>183</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 99

<sup>184</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

become collaborators in establishing thy kingdom of love in its fullness on earth.<sup>185</sup>

Throughout his life, Mar Ivanios strived for the liberation of the downtrodden and the emancipation of the human society. Freeing human persons from the clutches of sin and uniting them with God is the supreme liberation. Mar Ivanian eschatology always motivates people to attain freedom from sin without disregarding the material aspects of liberation.

### 3.6.3. Anthropocentrism versus Eco-Cosmism

Excessive concentration on humans has been one characteristic mark of traditional Christian Eschatology. "In formulating the doctrine of the end of time and eternal life (eschatology) Christian theologians have privileged the place of humans in the Kingdom of God."<sup>186</sup> In the context of present-day ecological crisis, the moderners demand an eco-cosmic eschatology. In their view "a responsible Christian eschatology is an ecological eschatology. It motivates work - preaching, teaching, modelling, organizing politics, prayer - to save our planet."<sup>187</sup>

Mar Ivanian eschatology gives due importance to the humans and the cosmos. "The creatures were also created, like me for the glory of God."<sup>188</sup> It is God's mastership that equals the humans and other creatures. "The origin of myself and the lower creatures are the same. My Lord is theirs too. They come from god and belong to him. He has the same power over me and them."<sup>189</sup> However, Mar Ivanios does not consider other creatures totally equal to the humans. "The being of other creatures is in a way similar to mine. Theirs is a flow of the glorified fullness of the substance of God. But I (human being) only have the dignity of being created in His image and likeness."<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Visudha Kumpasāram*, 96

<sup>186</sup> PHAN, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 99

<sup>187</sup> KELLER, *Eschatology, Ecology*, 86

<sup>188</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 25

<sup>189</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 25

<sup>190</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 25



Mar Ivanian eschatology presents the human hope of *eschaton* as participatory; sharing with fellow creatures and the cosmos.<sup>191</sup> It is quite assertive of the human responsibility to take fellow creation to the final destiny. "They (the creatures) do not reach God of their own. It takes place through the humans."<sup>192</sup> According to Mar Ivanios, the lower creatures are created by God to aid the humans attain their final destiny. However, they shall not use them as masters who have right over them. Instead, they should handle them like stewards who have to give account before the master or as those who have received a gift.<sup>193</sup> Here we get a wonderful model for human-nature relationship, keeping the *eschaton* at its central focus.

The nature and created beings guide the humans to the knowledge and love of God.<sup>194</sup> They teach the humans to know, love and serve God.<sup>195</sup> The creation says, "Receive, give and fear. Receive the help that you get through me. Give thanks to the creator of you and me for that help. Your final reward will be decided depending on how you have used me. Be fearful therefore, for you may receive eternal life if you use me according to the will of God, if not eternal damnation."<sup>196</sup> Thus, there is mutuality regarding the attainment of final destiny. Above all the object of Hope is participation in the Resurrected Christ, the God who became a part of the whole creation through incarnation. This way Mar Ivanian Eschatology keeps a balance between anthropocentrism and eco-cosmism.

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<sup>191</sup> Mar Ivanios gives the following reasons that are very well eschatological to consider the creatures as dignified as Humans: a) Both have the same origin and same end. b) God has loved the creatures from eternity; in the similar manner he loved humans. c) Both are created for the glory of God. d) The creatures like humans belong to God. (MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 24-27)

<sup>192</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 24

<sup>193</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 24-25

<sup>194</sup> See INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 55; MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 30-31

<sup>195</sup> See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 30-31

<sup>196</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 26

### 3.6.4. The Problem of Fragmentation

The traditionalists are accused of giving overweight to the soul, in their approach to the human person. The modernists on the other-hand have a hyper-regard for the body and its cravings. Indeed both the approaches are unhealthy since they fragment the human person. Mar Ivanian eschatology understands human person as a totality. Its approach is not 'either/or' but 'both/and'. "It is neither our body (alone) nor our soul (alone) that will resurrect. We shall rise as a whole, both body and soul, and get united with God,"<sup>197</sup> is what Mar Ivanios would say about our hope of resurrection. The following statement is further proof for his holistic understanding of the human person.

Incarnation is the means that God has given us so that our body and soul unite with God in resurrection as well as in this life. What we ought to do in order that our soul and body (i.e., our entirety) may unite with God, not only in this life, after death and resurrection but always, is to remain united with the body and soul of Jesus Christ, who was man and God. Union of either the body or the soul is not enough.<sup>198</sup>

## Synthesis and Conclusion

Mar Ivanios was indeed a prophet of hope. By calling our father Mar Ivanios as a prophet of hope I intend to count him in the ranks of those biblical figures like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Micah and so on. As we all know, those prophets of hope encouraged people to live in the present, looking towards a glorious future. They enabled people to find meaning for 'today' in terms of a 'tomorrow'. Were they offering a 'pie in the sky', an unfounded 'Utopia', to a people in desperation? No, never. Anchoring deeply on our Christian faith, holding firmly to the faith experience of biblical and ecclesial tradition, we can say that the hope they offered were not baseless. Its treasured guarantee, the strongest surety, was *Yahweh* - the faithful God of promise. In

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<sup>197</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 60

<sup>198</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 60

the attainment of the land of Canaan and in the establishment of Zion we find God's faithfulness in the Old Testament. The supreme expression of God's steadfastness is seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian religion grew with unreserved trust in this hope, making it a religion of Hope par excellence. In our liturgy, we always celebrate, express and experience our hope. Mar Ivanios' theology of hope grew nurtured in the biblical and liturgical traditions.

Every person who believes in Christ is bound to become a Prophet of Hope. "In some measure, hope is a function of what we believe, and in this global crisis, it is a function of what we believe *ultimately and comprehensively*."<sup>199</sup> What is it that we believe ultimately and comprehensively? We believe that God is, that He is steadfast in His promises and that He shall become all in all when the whole creation is recapitulated in Christ into a unity with God, the beginning and end. Our biblical eschatology, as we have already seen, derives hope from the steadfastness of God who is faithful in His promises. As it is rightly expressed in Mar Ivanian eschatology, it is the result of the faith in a God who is being with the creation in the history. In the liturgy this faith is celebrated and the mutual presence is specially as well as deeply experienced. It is this experience of mutual presence, of the Creator and the creatures that the authentic Christian tradition calls eternal life. In such a situation of togetherness God becomes all in all, ushering in the fulfilment of Christian hope. Mar Ivanios' Theology of Hope, which is deeply rooted in the Biblical and liturgical traditions, shows the light of hope that shines in the scripture and tradition to the world. It exhorts people to attain togetherness with God. The means it prescribes are practice of Charity, sanctification of oneself and above all trusting in the mercy of God.

The eschatology of Mar Ivanios understands *eschaton* as the dominion of God, befitting the oriental tradition. It is the destiny not only of human beings but also of the whole creation. God gives the invitation to the final bliss in his grace. It is an invitation to the whole creation. Through Christification and Deification

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<sup>199</sup> COBB Jr, *Is It Too Late?*, 81



humans respond to this invitation and attain the destiny. In following and uniting with Christ, the human response becomes active in deeds of charity.

Mar Ivanian Theology of Hope is through and through Theocentric as it does not conceive of *eschaton* apart from God. Here lies one of its ecumenical strengths. Everybody who believes in God, to whatever religion they may belong, can come together and work jointly for the establishment of God's kingdom. Since *eschaton* is a situation in which the Creator and the creation are in mutual presence, the constraint of spatio-temporality is overcome. Any place can be *eschaton* at any time of divine presence. It is in and through Christ we shall arrive at our destiny. Thus the person of Christ attains centrality, providing Hope through his resurrection. Resurrection itself is an act of God, a fulfilment of the divine plan of salvation for the creation. The Christo-centric orientation of Mar Ivanian Theology of Hope not only motivates us to imitate Christ but also provides us with an assurance of the future fulfilment of the Kingdom. As it is the historical Jesus who is exalted, our own human existence in the history becomes worthwhile. It also demands us to seek the will of God, as Jesus did, so that we too will resurrect as Christ did.

In imitating Christ, we are exhorted to live as compassionate liberators filled with social concern. The supreme liberation to be sought for is the freedom from sin. In this endeavour, our status becomes the exalted position of collaborators in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is the fullest fruition of this endeavour, which begins here in this life, that takes place in the life we await for. Along with us the whole creation look forward to the realization of *eschaton*. The creatureliness of both humans and the fellow creation is understood to be of a purpose and dignity. They mutually encourage each other to strive for the attainment of this goal. Because of this inclusive perspective, Mar Ivanios stands on a par with any other Christian theologian of

hope of our times. His eschatology is a prophetic Christian eschatology.<sup>200</sup>

Church, the kingdom of heaven on earth and the mystical body of Christ, has a significant place in Mar Ivanian eschatology. She enhances the deification process by providing the means, namely, the sacraments. She is the 'new heaven' on earth. She ought to provide the experience of *eschaton*, the reign of God, to humans by ensuring lasting peace. In this process, she has to aim at all-round human progress taking seriously the scientific and cultural growth.<sup>201</sup> The course of action reaches its grand-finale in the 'last day' of resurrection. The ultimate hope of attaining the destiny of *eschaton* is the goodness and steadfast love of God. We ought to trust Him and abandon into His hands. Thus, Mar Ivanios' eschatology has the characteristic Christian features. We find it at par with the spiritual and traditional understandings. By its insights on suffering<sup>202</sup> and death and by enkindling hope, it ascribes for itself the title 'true Christian theology of hope'.

The emphasis that Mar Ivanian eschatology gives to the renunciation of the world (*fuga mundi*) is quite significant.<sup>203</sup> In

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<sup>200</sup> The veracity of this claim becomes clear when our study on Mar Ivanian Theology of Hope is read against the following statement: "Prophetic eschatology today contends that Christians must come to grips with what Moltmann has called the vicious circles of death which threaten human existence: such evils as poverty; abuse of power; pollution of God's good earth, water and air; alienation and meaninglessness... We must make peace with nature lest we be self-destroyed in destroying it... We must feed the hungry, remembering that the only explicit criterion Jesus gave for the eschatological judgement was the question of what we have done for people who are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, lonely or in jail (Mt 25:31-41)... We must help people in this plight of god-forsakenness to find meaning for existence now." (STRAGG, Eschatology, 270)

<sup>201</sup> See INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 6-7

<sup>202</sup> Mar Ivanios' approach to suffering found expression in the following words; "God will not fail in His endeavours. He knows of the dangers and sufferings that humans face. Through this, He cleanses the human hearts. God purifies the humans by immersing them in tears. It is like the cleansing of gold in fire. Therefore I do not lose hope in sufferings." (*Girideepam*, 159)

<sup>203</sup> Mar Ivanios insisted on indifference (*nishkāma dharmam*) in human approach to the creatures. In his opinion, anybody who tends to use them without the spirit of indifference sins against the Dominion of God. It also ensures one's salvation



the consumeristic culture of today, it is important for the Christian who look forward to the *eschaton* to remain free from the enslaving enticements of this world. S/he ought to be the master of the world and slave only of God, not of the world. It is in this radical option for God the *eschaton* will be established. The highest value sought after will be God alone. The temporal and temporary values and their collapse will not be a matter of concern for one who considers “the Lord of all” as the supreme value to be sought after. This will put an end to utilitarian mentality, exploitation (including that of earth and nature) and dehumanising abuses. It is here we find the liberative strength of Mar Ivanian theology of hope. It helps all, irrespective of sex or status, to find meaning for the earthly life. All have the dignity of being called by God to attain the same destiny, that is, the Creator himself. It also invites humans to respect the fellow creation for it guides them to the final destiny. Thus, Mar Ivanian eschatology provides hope not only to humans but also to the cosmos.

Has the Church, the Malankara Catholic Church in particular, been successful in providing such a faith response (theology) of hope? Did she show the true light of Hope, which shines in scripture, liturgy and tradition to the world? Is she winning-over many by her promise of eternal life? I would only draw attention to the following comment. “The Old Testament found hope in the anticipated interventions of a transcendent God. The New Testament looked forward to the apocalyptic end of an unacceptable history. Few of us can live with these vision of reality, and their collapse in the last three centuries seem to have removed the grounds of hope for many people.”<sup>204</sup> The impact of this continues to reflect not only as hopelessness but also, paradoxically, in hope. “In much of our youth culture hope is focused on short-term goals, and it is easily shattered when these are not realized. The quest for kicks, or mystical meaning, or celebration of life in the present moment, are, in part, an

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by ensuring the freedom of heart, the state of being free from any greedy attachments. (See MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 34-38, 65-68)

<sup>204</sup> COBB Jr., *Is It Too Late?*, 81



expression of the loss of hope, a loss we older people have bequeathed to our children.”<sup>205</sup> Can we ignore the finger that is pointed against us who take pride in our ancient and Orthodox Christian tradition? Isn’t the American author’s description of the hope of ‘youth culture’ carries along with a familiar Indian air? Increasing number of suicides, drug addiction, craze for power, money and luxury, corruption, speed-mania, hysteric spiritualism...What else is the reason but Loss of Hope, for these alarming phenomena?

Here stands in demand the contemporary Christian theology of hope, the genre to which the prophetic Mar Ivanian eschatology belongs. It can dispel the pall of despair that encircles the humankind by spreading the light of authentic Christian hope, by virtue of its balanced emphasis on *orthodoxy* of faith and its *orthopraxis*, the present and the future, the individual and the community, the Church and the world, the human and the cosmos, Christ and above all on God –the faithful God of promise.

The Malankara Catholic faithful of today, as disciples of Christ, children of the Holy Church and heirs to the legacy of Mar Ivanios, have indeed a prophetic mission to accomplish. Our patrimony as well as circumstances demands us to become prophets of hope in our times. The Mar Ivanian theology of hope, with all its characteristics and merits that are pointed out in this paper (of course, it is very little that I have understood) I believe, is effective in heralding hope to our troubled times. This patrimony that the Malankara Catholic Church has received from her father, Geevarghese Mar Ivanios OIC, can enable her to spread the rays of hope in carrying out her mission.




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<sup>205</sup> COBB Jr., *Is It Too Late?*, 81

# **Role of Women in the Participatory Church**

## **A Vision of Mar Ivanios**

**Augustine Kavungal Thengazhikathu OIC**

### **0. Introduction**

The Church's ministry has been affected through out the ages by the social, political and cultural milieu in which it was exercised. It arose in response to changing historical circumstances. There has been a good deal of discussion in recent years about the role and status of women in the Church, much of the discussion being centred around the question of which activities or functions within the community of the Church women should or should not be permitted to take part in or carry out. The juncture at which women and their ministry meet in the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is fraught with ambiguities. It is an exciting crossroad, full of possibilities, but the women who meet there have serious questions to pose about the social structures within which they live and work. They have questions about the nature of their ministry, power and authority and leadership. In our own times, many factors have conspired to broaden, deepen and enrich our view of humanitarian and spiritual Christian service. The issue of women leadership in the Church is not merely an issue of rights and privileges, nor is it pivoted with the sole desire to see a segment of society liberated nor to effect social and moral changes. Women are integral members of the Church the mystical body of Christ.

Women's ministries are linked to the fulfilment of God's desire to reveal his infinite love and glory. It is when each member of the body of Christ allows the expression of Christ to come forth, the divine presence will be fully revealed.

The late Archbishop Mar Ivanios, formerly known as Fr. P.T. Geevarghese, the founder of Bethany Congregations, undertook a serious study of the above. He is the pioneer father of the illustrious Re-union Movement in India. He read the signs of the time as a Syriac scholar and imbibed the feminist elements of the Syriac tradition and tried to expose them in the Orthodox Church and provided for its continuation in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. During his period, the Orthodox Church was facing internal strife and discord and quarrels and was not interested in the comprehensive development of the community and the vocation of the Church. To him the Church is a community of faith, hope and love of men and women, of mysterious human beings, unutterably equal yet different, made in the image of God and reflecting the glory of God, the Three in One. He was a great visionary.

This article is intended to be a study of *Mar Ivanios' vision on the role of women in the participatory Church*. In order to acquire a better understanding of the participatory nature of women in the Church, first let us review what the Bible and tradition say about it. We can see in the Bible the participatory role of women in the salvific act of God in creation and which is continued through the mystical body of Christ, the Church. The contribution of Mar Ivanios to the empowerment of women is analysed in the background the Biblical perspectives and the patristic traditions of the Church. The third and the final part of the article highlights the theological and practical visions of Mar Ivanios towards a theology of empowerment of women in the Church and society. The conclusion is a summing up of the whole article.



## 1. Women in the Bible and in the Christian Tradition

Each individual has a part to play within the Church, the body of Christ, specifically as male and female. The primary aim of each is to be a good Christian, where gender plays only a minor part in the living out of their lives as Christians. It is often assumed that any biblical teaching on this matter is culturally conditioned. We make a humble effort in this treatise to investigate what the Bible states about women and their role in the Church.

### 1.1. Women in the Old Testament

God created man and woman in his own image and ordained them equally to share in his creative work (Gen 1:26-27). Together they move creation ahead till the flowering of it in the new creation: "Then I saw a new heaven and earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away and the sea was no more" (Rev 21:1). We also see that "they worked together but in different ways yet without inferiority or hierarchical restrictions making either gender subservient to the other."<sup>1</sup>

In the Old Testament women had varied and conspicuous roles to play. The sobering influence they exercised in the family, society and nation is unrivalled. We see that their lives demonstrate sparkling virtues of courage, fortitude in times of crisis, sacrifices they make as mothers, wives, daughters, and as leaders of their community and nation. In times of persecution and bondage (Ex 1:13-14) women like Jochebed and Miriam impugned and thwarted the cruel edict of a tyrant king and preserved the life of baby Moses by their combined efforts of courage and faith, and were in fact instrumental in the redemptive plan of God for his people (Ex 2:3-4). In every sphere of human activity and under all circumstances, women had played major roles and were held in high esteem by spiritual leaders, for their piety, diligence and virtues. "Hebrew history can catch glimpses of how ably and well the Hebrew women shared with men, the

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<sup>1</sup> KAVUNKAL, A Community of Equals, 6

privileges, dangers and responsibilities of their household, tribe or city.”<sup>2</sup> Quite often through the centuries, the social and legal status of women fluctuated due to alien invasions and their influences.

## 1.2. Women in the New Testament: Jesus’ Attitude Towards Women

During the time of Jesus, women counted for little, in society. Women retreated from public life as much as possible. They were segregated in the temple to the portion set apart for women. Their duties in offering prayer were similar to those of slaves. However, with the coming of Jesus, a new era dawned upon womanhood, which brought full emancipation, and the woman was raised to her rightful place as man’s counterpart. Jesus interacted with women primarily as human beings and not as mere sexual beings. “He was interested in them as persons, seeing their sex as an integral part but by no means the totality of their personality.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus showed personal affection towards women. (Lk10:38-42, Jn11:3,5,28-36) They tasted his goodness, compassion, forgiveness and love. The contrite and broken-hearted woman in the Bible experienced his forgiveness and peace. (Lk 7:38-39, 47-48, 50) The Syrophoenician woman, in answer to her importunate pleadings, obtained the desired healing of her daughter.

We find that women also responded warmly to Jesus by their acts of love and devotion and brought cheer and warmth to his life. It was to a Samaritan woman that Jesus asked for water to drink, and she in turn brought a harvest of souls to him. (Jn 4:7-29) Hospitable women like Martha received Jesus into their homes when he needed rest. (Lk 10:38-42) Women stood by him in the hours of his agony on the cross and mourned for him. (Mk 15:40-41) In the gospels we hear not only of men disciples but also women disciples. “A band of ministering women catered to the physical and material needs of the Master and of His followers from their purse and accompanied Him on His tours.”<sup>4</sup> (Lk 8.2-3)

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<sup>2</sup> JOHNSON, *Women of the Bible*, xviii

<sup>3</sup> EVANS, *Woman in the Bible*, 44

<sup>4</sup> JOHNSON, *Women of the Bible*, xix

These women disciples remained loyal to their master till the end, stood by the cross and dutifully observed Jesus' burial. Henry Mc Cook depicts the women of Jesus' time. "No woman was His enemy; none ever helped His enemies to set up a trap for Him. From the cradle to the Ascension, women were with Him as His loving friends-last by the Cross and first at the Resurrection."<sup>5</sup>

### 1. 3. Women in the Early Church

In all communities, as a rule, people usually have a variety of tasks, ministries and functions to perform; in the New Testament a whole series of such duties can be identified. Those who exercised such functions might feel that God calls them to a particular ministry in the community. It is a generally agreed that the women were fully privileged members of the early Christian community. They were present when the gift of Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of the Pentecost and they were always active in the Gospel ministry. The infant Church, which was a community of equal disciples, gave to women a dignified status. The women were part of the praying community in the upper room. They "were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers." (Acts 1:14) We see in Our Lord's teachings a revolutionary new equality for men and women. It is probably not accidental that Luke focuses primarily on the conversion of Lydia, one woman (Acts 16:12-15, 40) and one man, the jailer (Acts 16:23-39). "This is in order to stress the equality of man and woman in God's plan of salvation, and their equal importance to the new community."<sup>6</sup>

In his letters, Paul addresses women as his fellow workers. We have only to read the greetings at the end of the letter to the Romans to see how many women were actively involved in the proclamation of the Gospel: ten of the twenty nine prominent people addressed here were women. (Rom 16:1-16) "First, we have Phoebe, who was on an official mission for the Church of

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<sup>5</sup> JOHNSON, *Women of the Bible*, xx

<sup>6</sup> WITHERINGTON III, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 148



Cenchreac. She is called *diakonos*, which suggests that she was the leader of a house community.”<sup>7</sup> Junia is particularly important; Paul even describes her along with Adronicus, as ‘distinguished among the apostles who had already ‘confessed Christ before him.’ (Rom 16:7) According to the letter to the Philippians women like Eudonia and Syntyche with exactly the same status as Paul and his other male fellow workers ‘fought for the Gospel.’ (Phil 4:2) Priscilla with her husband Aquila mentioned several times in Paul’s correspondence, also has a special status (Rom 16:3; 1Cor 16:9; Acts 18:1; 18, 18:26). It is true to say that the community, as Paul sees it, and which according to the letter to the Ephesians ‘is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets’ (Eph 2:20), was also a Church of women apostles and women prophets. They were of one heart and one mind. “They participated in the work of evangelising and proclaiming the gospel along with the men in true spirit of community of disciples and partnership of love.”<sup>8</sup>

To sum up, we may say with Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza that “the Pauline literature and Acts still allow us to recognize that women were among the most prominent missionaries and leaders in the early Christian movement. They were apostles and ministers like Paul, and some were his co-workers. They were preachers and competitors in the race for the Gospel. They founded house Churches and, as prominent patrons, used their influence for other missionaries and Christians.”<sup>9</sup>

#### 1. 4. Women in the Patristic Teaching

The most fitting word to describe the Church Fathers’ attitude towards women is ambivalence. “One undoubted manifestation of this ambivalence lies in the fathers selective appeal to the Bible.”<sup>10</sup> Women of the apostolic period were so marked by their simplicity, modesty and piety that they reflected the transforming power of

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<sup>7</sup> FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her*, 170

<sup>8</sup> MONTEIRO, *Who Will Break Down the Wall*, 241

<sup>9</sup> FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her*, 183

<sup>10</sup> CLARK, *Women in the Early Church*, 15

Christ. Christian women of the patristic era who renounced the traditional sexual and domestic roles did indeed find new worlds open to them, worlds of scholarship and contemplation, pilgrimage and charitable endeavour. "One way in which the fathers effectively encouraged greater freedom for women was in their championing asceticism."<sup>11</sup> Asceticism was an important factor in the improvement of women's role in the patristic era.

The fourth Christian century, with its outburst of ascetic enthusiasm, brought new possibilities outside the domestic circle of women's lives. This century, in which the Christian women came into their own as models of pious life and as mentors for others, set examples of devout living that could be imitated by the next generations of women. "The fact that many of the women praised by the fathers came from the highest aristocracy and renounced wealth as well as social respectability in order to become Christian ascetics made their sacrifices all the more dramatic in the eyes of the men who wrote about them."<sup>12</sup> Numerous testimonies revealed that some early Christian women outclassed men in their knowledge of Scripture, the spiritual languages and theology. Those women of earlier times rejected worldly vanity and sought one thing only, namely, to become companions of the apostles and to share their pursuits. "Thus Priscilla was not the only woman of this sort; all the rest were like this too."<sup>13</sup>

Despite the many restrictions the Church fathers placed on women, they also composed laudatory letters and treatises about the important women in their lives. Here the women are upheld as glorious exemplars of Christian devotion, so outstanding in their faith, their generosity and their intellectual power that they deserve to be ranked above most Christian men. Most of these women at some point renounced worldly society for a life of Christian asceticism. "John Chrysostom and Augustine leave portraits of

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<sup>11</sup> CLARK, *Women in the Early Church*, 17

<sup>12</sup> CLARK, *Women in the Early Church*, 20

<sup>13</sup> CLARK, *Women in the Early Church*, 159

their mothers, thus providing insights into the problems and life styles of Christian matrons and widows.”<sup>14</sup>

### 1. 5. Women in the Eastern Tradition

The East Syrian tradition is one of the oldest traditions. “As the Syrian Church and tradition developed, it was natural that women as well as men participate fully in the life of the community whether it be in the work of the ministry or in the pursuit of sanctity.”<sup>15</sup> This tradition reveals the significant role carried out by women. The Divine Liturgy makes references to women disciples. Noteworthy also in the Syriac Church was the ministry carried out by deaconesses. “Early Syriac writings and hagiographies inform us of the life and deeds of women who were spiritual teachers and heroic martyrs.”<sup>16</sup> “The ascetic spirituality of the Syro-Oriental Christians was in direct continuity with Christ and his Apostles.”<sup>17</sup> Holy women have played a great role and exerted considerable influence in the life of the East Syriac Church. “Bnay-Bnat Qyama had not only a vocation to ascetical life but also an ecclesiastical ministry, an apostolate, which meant an active involvement in the life of the Church.”<sup>18</sup> “In the East Syriac Tradition, all Christians without any discrimination or reserve participated in the ministry of the Church.”<sup>19</sup>

Several writings authored throughout early Syriac Church history contain the many achievements of holy women. The authors of *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* make the following observations: “We see women who are strong of character and strong of faith; who are assertive and even aggressive when they need to be; who are leaders of men and women both, and of religious and lay communities; who are courageous, firm, compassionate, honest, unassuming, creative, and wise. We see women whose actions speak far louder than the words said about

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<sup>14</sup> CLARK, *Women in the Early Church*, 205

<sup>15</sup> BEGGIANI, *Feminine Elements in the Syriac Tradition*, 129

<sup>16</sup> BEGGIANI, *Feminine Elements in the Syriac Tradition*, 129

<sup>17</sup> HABBI, *East Syrian Women Saints*, 100

<sup>18</sup> HABBI, *East Syrian Women Saints*, 124

<sup>19</sup> HABBI, *East Syrian Women Saints*, 124



them.”<sup>20</sup> “As early as AD 110, virgins and widows are mentioned as a privileged class in the Church of Smyrna. Hermas and Justin speak of them. The *banquet of the ten virgins* by St. Methodius of Olympus (AD 311) is an exaltation of virginity.”<sup>21</sup>

The Orthodox Church has followed this tradition. In the Eastern Churches, the universally present icon of the Mother of God radiates a tender and deep femininity. “The common calling of all the baptized, men and women, is prophetically declared in the sacraments of Christian initiation, administered by the Orthodox Church is deeply symbolic rites to all, with no distinction between the sexes.”<sup>22</sup> The words, “You who are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Gal 3:27) are sung by the choir when the newly baptized male or female, clad in their baptismal robe, are received into the eucharistic community, the visible body of Christ, of which they have become full members.”<sup>23</sup>

The Cappadocian Fathers, the true founders of the doctrine of human kind in Orthodox Theology, like Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, together with Maximus the Confessor after them, strenuously affirm, “the ontological unity of human kind beyond the distinction between men and women according to the order of creation.”<sup>24</sup> Summing up the doctrine of the Cappadocian fathers, Gregory of Nazianzus declares, “the same creator for men and women, for both the same clay, the same image, the same death, the same resurrection.” (Discourses, 37,6).<sup>25</sup> “Women for the Fathers, far from being merely sexual objects, were the ‘complimentary other,’ with whom they conserved, their companions, and at times their teachers in their spiritual struggles. Their egalitarianism is placed in the eschatological perspective of the fullness of the end of time, when genital sexuality, no longer of any use, will be transcended.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> BROCK, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, 21

<sup>21</sup> MONK, *Orthodox Spirituality*, 6-7

<sup>22</sup> SIGEL, *The Ordination of Women in the Orthodox Church*, 1

<sup>23</sup> SIGEL, *The Ordination of Women in the Orthodox Church*, 2

<sup>24</sup> SIGEL, *The Ordination of Women in the Orthodox Church*, 2

<sup>25</sup> SIGEL, *The Ordination of Women in the Orthodox Church*, 3

<sup>26</sup> SIGEL, *The Ordination of Women in the Orthodox Church*, 4

## 1. 6. Women in the Teachings of the Church

The Second Vatican Council, a landmark in the history of the Catholic Church, has given the impetus for a new awakening among the People of God with regard to the dignity and equality of women. In its dogmatic constitution on the Church, the Second Vatican Council insists that “in the Church there is... no inequality arising from race or nationality, social conditions or sex, for ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free man; there is neither male nor female. For you are all “one” in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:28)” (LG 32) According to the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, the basis for the equal dignity of all human beings is the fact that man and woman alike are made in the image of God, as we are told in the story of creation. In its closing message, the council made a prophetic declaration:

The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women, imbued with the spirit of the gospel, can do so much to aid humanity in not failing.<sup>27</sup>

“This message sums of what had already been expressed in the Council’s teachings, especially in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (Nos. 8, 9, 60) and in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam actuositatem* (No. 9).”<sup>28</sup> The prophetic utterance of Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in terris* is an assurance of the Church, “Since women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human person both in domestic and public life.” Following the spirit of Vatican II, Popes Paul VI and John Paul II further affirmed the dignity and vocation of women. For instance, in his apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, John Paul II highlights the

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<sup>27</sup> Cited in CHAKKALAKAL, Women in Participatory Structures, 289

<sup>28</sup> CHAKKALAKAL, Women in Participatory Structures, 290



essential equality of man and woman since both are created in the image and likeness of God. Both of them are equally capable of receiving the outpouring of divine truth in the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup>

In the post Synodol apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* we read,

The synod Fathers were most concerned that the church should be a participatory church in which no one feels excluded, and they judged the wider participation in the life and mission of the church in Asia to be an especially pressing need. Women have a quite special aptitude in passing on the faith so much so that Jesus himself appeals to it in the work of evangelisation. That is what happens to the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at Jacob's well: he chose her for the first expansion of the new faith in non-Jewish territory. To enhance their service in the church, there should be greater opportunities for women to take courses in theology and other fields of study; and men in seminaries and houses of formation need to be trained to regard women as co-workers in the apostolate. Women should be more effectively involved in pastoral programmes, in diocesan and parish pastoral councils, and in diocesan synods. Their abilities and services should be fully appreciated in health care, in education, in preparing the faithful for the sacraments, in building community and in peace making. (45)

The Indian hierarchy too have expressed similar views. By way of example let me cite here the statement on women issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India at its general body meeting in Varanasi in March 1988. It reads thus: "The church should seriously consider the discrimination and oppression which women in society are facing in our country today. We should empower them in such a way that they can take up leadership roles both in the church and in the society. In every diocese there should be a cell to monitor all cases of oppression and injustice done to women and take appropriate action to remedy them."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women

<sup>30</sup> CHAKKALAKAL, Women in Participatory Structures, 290



### 1.7. Women in the Malankara Tradition

The Malankara Church forms part of the larger Christian community in Kerala, the St. Thomas Christians. The arrival of the Portuguese missionaries and the defective policies of the Portuguese authorities caused a split in the community into two groups as *puthenkūr* and *pazhayakūr*.<sup>31</sup> The *puthenkūr* community later split into many groups like Jacobaite, Syrian Orthodox, Orthodox Syrian, Marthoma, etc.<sup>32</sup>

Being the descendants and inheritors of the St. Thomas Christian tradition, the Malankara Church followed the same social customs. They were "Christian in faith, Hindu in culture, and Oriental in worship."<sup>33</sup> This community followed a patriarchal system in the family. The father was supreme in the family. "Men and women would not sit or eat together, and husband and wife do not constitute an exception to this."<sup>34</sup> Women were very submissive to their husbands. "Wives would not speak of their husbands calling them by their names. At meals wives would serve their husbands but would eat only after the husbands had finished."<sup>35</sup> "The women stayed at home according to the customs of the noble caste and did the household work."<sup>36</sup>

Girls did not have the freedom to choose their marriage partners. Arranged marriages were common. "The parents chose the partners in marriage for their sons and daughters."<sup>37</sup> The grown up boys and girls did not go out together. "When going to the church or visiting the priests, they would cover themselves with a big veil that left only their faces uncovered."<sup>38</sup> "In the church men occupied the front part of the nave, and women, the rear part, and there were separate doors for men and women to enter the

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<sup>31</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 56

<sup>32</sup> PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 216

<sup>33</sup> KOODAPUZHA, *The Faith and Communion of the Thomas Christians*, 27

<sup>34</sup> PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 81

<sup>35</sup> PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 81

<sup>36</sup> MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India - 1*, 157

<sup>37</sup> PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 80

<sup>38</sup> PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 82

church.”<sup>39</sup> “Women seldom get a chance to go out of their villages for shopping, and during a festival the church and the surrounding areas assume the appearance of a fair.”<sup>40</sup>

## 2. The Contributions of Mar Ivanios to the Empowerment of Women

We came to know that in the Malankara Church, women have remained cloistered and confined within the four walls of the home and were dismissed as the second sex. They did not have any voice in the decision making in the family. Household was their complete world. Their highest accomplishment was in providing supportive roles to the male members in the family. Mar Ivanios realized that the neglect of women power in his community was perhaps the most important cause of backwardness of the Orthodox Church. He recognized the necessity of the complementary role of women and men in the progress of his community. He started a variety of means to empower the women in the Church.

### 2. 1. Women’s Education: A Key to Social Change

Fr. P. T. Geevarghese who had later been ordained Mar Ivanios, was the first Orthodox priest to have a Master’s Degree. So the people affectionately called him *M. A. Achan*.<sup>41</sup> He had a wide knowledge both in secular and ecclesial subjects. Fr. P. T. Geevarghese’s “road was wider and he was an ocean of knowledge.”<sup>42</sup> In the Syrian tradition, the Church was depicted as “the bride of Christ,”<sup>43</sup> women disciples were the first evangelists,<sup>44</sup> and Mary the Mother of God was venerated with utmost piety. But in the Orthodox Church, the position of women was practically inferior. As he started revival measures in his community, he turned his attention to the women flock also. Mar

<sup>39</sup> PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 86

<sup>40</sup> THOMAS, *Churches in India*, 9

<sup>41</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 35

<sup>42</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 20. comment made by Patriarch Mar Abdullah

<sup>43</sup> *Qyamta*, B 49

<sup>44</sup> *Qyamta*, B 89

Ivanios was well aware of the social and moral degradation of his community at that time.

In *Girideepam*, he wrote: "Prosperity of any community depends upon the character formation of its women."<sup>45</sup> He knew that the women in his community were backward in the field of education. Fr. P. T. Geevarghese was as much concerned with the advancement of women as also for providing higher education to the Malankara youth. He recognized the role of educated women in the progress of the family as well as of the society. His pastoral concern turned his attention to the conditions of the women of the Malankara community. "As the woman occupies an important role in the family which is the basic cell of the society and the Church at large, the Malankara community is in dire need of the service of dedicated religious women committed to the cause of the people of God."<sup>46</sup> In view of their development and emancipation he brought some young girls to get them trained as animators to work for the education and thereby the liberation of women.<sup>47</sup>

Once when I had come home for vacation I sought the permission of the Metropolitan, Vattasseril Mar Dionysius, to take some ladies for higher education in Calcutta since women's education was something close to my heart. And *Vattasseril Thirumeni* was only too pleased to grant my request on two scores. First it was a wish fulfilment for the late Varghese Mappilai. Second it opened great possibilities for women's emancipation through education within the fold of the Church. The first lady who volunteered to go with me to Calcutta to pursue higher education beyond the boundaries of the state was the daughter of (the late) E.J. John Vakeel, Mrs. John Mathai. Emulating the courage and quiet wisdom of this young girl, many other girls followed suit in later years.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 63

<sup>46</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 66

<sup>47</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 65

<sup>48</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 64-65



He expressed his wish to the principal of the Diocesan College, Calcutta, Sr. Mary Victoria. European nuns were running this college. The Sister-Principal who appreciated this commendable suggestion soon accepted a few young women from the Malankara on the college rolls. This opened up possibilities for them to train themselves in a convent in Barisole and pursue studies in the English language simultaneously. A few young women from Kerala were regularly taken into the convent by mother superior Edith, at the instance of Fr. P. T. Geevarghese<sup>49</sup>. Through education the women were made aware of their own dignity and their role in Church and society. Realizing this fact he started girls' schools in view of their liberation and emancipation. "To create an atmosphere of love and peace in Malankara, a parched land of faction fights and legal wrangles, through an enlightened young generation, was the dream and hope of Fr. P.T Geevarghese. The priority he gave and the steps he took towards this goal during his fruitful tenure of service in Serampore would remain a glorious chapter in the history of nascent Kerala."<sup>50</sup>

## 2. 2. Religious Congregation for Women

The need for a spiritual movement for the upliftment of his community was felt by Mar Ivanios. Lack of education for women and its impact in families and society prompted him to improve their education. The High Church Sisters of the Oxford Mission, Calcutta offered to take care of the women he brought to Calcutta.<sup>51</sup> Mar Ivanios wanted women to enter into areas that men would find it difficult. "The proclamation of the gospel through the education of women and children would be better accomplished by educated and consecrated women."<sup>52</sup>

The service of the religious women in the Church is indispensable for the spiritual and educational growth of the community and the society at large. In the education of the women folk and health care service women have

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<sup>49</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 55

<sup>50</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 56

<sup>51</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 25

<sup>52</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 143

proved to be better than men and their services are always preferable to those of men. If those women can fully dedicate themselves to God and closely imitate Him, with a vow of poverty, obedience, and chastity, their service will produce far-reaching results. Experience has proved it so.<sup>53</sup>

He was fully convinced of the dire necessity of dedicated religious women in his Church, so he encouraged those girls who had chosen the vocation of religious life. With this aim in mind Mar Ivanios contacted Catholic, non-Catholic and non-Christian religious movements elsewhere, but it was the monastic ideal of St. Basil that fascinated his oriental mind the most. "His visit to Gandhi's *Sabarmati* Ashram and Tagore's *Santiniketan* had great influence on the foundation of his indigenous congregation."<sup>54</sup>

It was after prayers, penance, study and above all submission to the Spirit to do the will of God, that he founded the congregation for women. "He would be best remembered in the history of the Church as a pioneer proponent of an ascetic order in the Syrian Church, every inch Indian."<sup>55</sup> "It was on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1925 that the first three members made their religious consecration."<sup>56</sup> The primary aim and obligation of a Bethany sister "is to love Jesus Christ intensively and to imitate Him closely. To fulfil this aim she leads a life of prayer like Mary, a life of service like Martha, and a life of witness to the faith like Lazarus."<sup>57</sup> The Bethany movement, which has captured the attention and admiration of Christians as well as non-Christians, has brought about a spiritual and social upheaval in the society.

### 2. 3. As Co-workers

By founding the congregation of women, Mar Ivanios formed a group of co-workers for fulfilling his task. These educated

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<sup>53</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 142

<sup>54</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 155

<sup>55</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios, The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 56

<sup>56</sup> SERENA, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 69

<sup>57</sup> *The Holy Rules of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ*, No.5



religious women fraternity whole-heartedly participated in the renewal of the community. "The primary role of a Bethany sister is to make herself available for the spiritual renewal of the Church."<sup>58</sup> They worked among the ordinary people, especially among the rural women for their educational, social empowerment and spiritual revival. Their deep sense of spirituality, and zeal for preserving their traditions, attracted the whole Church. "Where there is Mary there is Martha, where there is Martha there is Mary, in Bethany there are both Mary and Martha."<sup>59</sup> Mar Ivanios exhorted his followers to imitate Christ through an integrated life of prayer and action so that prayer and action would become a single response of love, namely, love of God and love of neighbour. "The missionary activities of the congregation comprise the reunion of the Christian brethren, evangelisation of non-Christians, education, caring for the sick and helpless and other social activities."<sup>60</sup> As the school is the primary place where a person receives total formation, the sisters engaged in educational activities to instil in children a sense of prayer, honesty, responsibility and generosity.<sup>61</sup>

## 2. 4. The Foundation of the Third Order

Realizing the role and importance of the family in the process of evangelisation, Fr. P. T. Geevarghese founded a third order for the married people to help them lead a good Christian life. As our own experience reveals from the very beginning, the family serves as the great preserver and transmitter of spiritual and Christian values from one generation to another. The family is the fountainhead of virtues; a school of wisdom; the sanctuary in which we learn to love God and one another. He gave clear guidelines to those who aspired to join this order. "Those who would like to lead a good Christian life may join the order. But in no way are they obliged to accept the religious obligations but are expected to lead a most holy family life in the pattern of the Holy

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<sup>58</sup> SERENA, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 80

<sup>59</sup> SERENA, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 82

<sup>60</sup> *The Holy Rules of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ*, No. 221

<sup>61</sup> *The Holy Rules of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ*, No. 225



Family of Nazareth. They need not abandon their property nor do they live in 'ashrams' or in convents, but are highly expected to witness the love of God by leading a family life based on Christian principles."<sup>62</sup>

Fr. P. T Geevarghese knew very well that the Holy Family of Nazareth was the key to the understanding of all values that must be proclaimed to the families of his time. "The Christian family is so important and its role is so basic in transforming the world and in building up the kingdom of God, that he himself considered the place of the family equal to that of the Church as he said while speaking on the role of women in the family and society at large."<sup>63</sup>

### **3. The Impact of Mar Ivanios' Vision on the Role of Women in the Church**

The Church and the ecclesial traditions it embodies have been twenty centuries in the making. The Church is the continuation of Jesus Christ. By baptism Jesus becomes our brother, God our Father, the Holy Spirit our life and all the baptized as our brothers and sisters in spite of the variations of colour, race, culture, economic status and national or continental divergences. Thus we find that there is an understanding basic equality among all the Christian faithful. The Syrian Church was facing internal conflicts and quarrels and was not interested in the overall growth and development of the community and the vocation of the Church. Though the community had a high social position in the social scenario, within the Church we could see only a bleak and dark picture. Nobody seriously cared for the welfare and well being of its members. Mar Ivanios with a firm conviction and a deep awareness came to the forefront and introduced many reforms in the Church. Women, the marginalized group of his community, now became the focal point for the family and the Church. He realized the need for the empowerment of women and appreciated their role in the family and in the Church. Through education he

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<sup>62</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 6

<sup>63</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 260

raised their social status and they became active workers of the evangelisation process. The religious women became the key figures for the social change and they were the co-workers for his pastoral mission in his community. This indigenous order, which was unknown to the Orthodox Church, now became an instrument for a social change. A new dawn had ushered in the Malankara church.

### 3. 1. Reforms within the Orthodox Church

Women's upliftment through education and the provision and the establishment of educational institutions for women and the formation of the women religious congregations in the community triggered an intellectual and spiritual growth in the Malankara Church. As a consequence it affected the social status of the women in his community. Though he entered into communion with the Catholic Church, the effects of the reforms continued in the Orthodox Church uninterrupted. In the beginning, the hierarchy and the lay people in general were against the women's congregations.<sup>64</sup> But later their attitudes changed and the whole community whole-heartedly supported the ventures of the sisters.<sup>65</sup> Mar Ivanios and the Bethany Sisters later came into communion with the Catholic Church.<sup>66</sup> The Catholic communion of the founder and its members did not affect their monastic life style. The formation of Bethany paved the way for the formation of various religious groups for men and women in the Orthodox Church.

The following are some of the women's congregations formed after the communion. Immediately after the Catholic communion of Mar Ivanios and the Bethany Sisters, Mar Thevodosios formed a congregation for men and women at Perunad, and named it Bethany. The Niranam Metropolitan founded the Sisters of Mount Thabor at Pathanapuram. Kizhakkambalam Bethlehem

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<sup>64</sup> SULGA, Mar Ivanios, *Bethany Sthāpakanum Punaraikya Silpiyum*, 5-6; PACHOMIOS, *Mother Saina*, 8; PANTHOLIL, *Mother Sulga*, 18

<sup>65</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 155

<sup>66</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 443

convent was founded by Frs. V.C. Geevarghese and K. P. Paulose in 1931. Kadambanad Nazareth Convent, which is known as the 'Community of God's love' was started in 1966. Suranad Bassalel convent was started by Ramban Barskeepa in 1967. Kunnamkulam Mary Magdalene convent was formed in 1930.<sup>67</sup> Now there are 20 ashrams and 15 convents in the Orthodox Church.<sup>68</sup>

### 3. 2. Formation of a New Community

Like the Christian community of the early centuries (Gal 3:28), Mar Ivanios laid the foundation of a new community of equals. In this new community, there were clergy and laity, Christians and Hindu converts. Consequently, this community evolved as the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church. They worked together for the growth of the Holy Catholic Church. This is mainly because of the constant exhortation of Mar Ivanios to his people. His pastoral letters bear ample testimonies to the concrete evidence for the same. Each and every person in his Church had a role to play in the life of the Church. He encouraged the laity to take part in the ministry for the growth and development of the Church.

He exhorted his clergy thus: "We are living in an age where the Bishops and Popes are earnestly trying to accommodate its laity for the Church's mission."<sup>69</sup> So, "do not discourage them, instead encourage them to do their ministry."<sup>70</sup> He exhorted the members of his Church that "they should work hard for the existence and development of the Church."<sup>71</sup> In his pastoral letter no. 9/42, Mar Ivanios instructed the people and directed the clergy to encourage the practice of common family prayers. He insisted that the priests "encourage their parishioners to conduct common prayers twice or thrice in a day in the family and prescribed the prayers which are to be recited each time."<sup>72</sup> He had great

<sup>67</sup> Osthathios, *Malankarasabhyum Suvisheshavēlayum*, 356-359

<sup>68</sup> Chandanappally, *Malankara Orthodox Sabha Directory*, 101

<sup>69</sup> Mar Ivanios, Pastoral Letter dated 1 June 1946

<sup>70</sup> Mar Ivanios, Pastoral Letter dated 1 June 1946

<sup>71</sup> Mar Ivanios, Pastoral Letter dated 1 June 1946

<sup>72</sup> Mar Ivanios, Pastoral Letter dated 18 April 1942



enthusiasm in teaching catechism. He reminded the parents and the catechists about their special duty to instruct the children.<sup>73</sup> He said, “we can’t get harvest from a field where seeds are not sown. Likewise, without proper teaching of catechism in time, we can’t expect God fearing and holy people from the parishes.”<sup>74</sup> He sent his loving commands to the children on the feast day of *mayaltho* and reminded them “to renew the commitment of their baptism.”<sup>75</sup>

His vision of the Church and the participatory role of its members are reflected in his pastoral letter no. 7/46. He said, “the constitution of the Church is only a directive which helps to follow the precepts which had been given by our Lord and the Apostles.”<sup>76</sup> In this letter, he exhorted his people “to take part in different ministries for the up building of the Church.”<sup>77</sup> He said, “the relationship of the Episcopo, vicar and the parishioners is not like elected members of an organization, it is like that of a family. The Episcopo is the spiritual father and the laity, the spiritual children and the clergy are the delegates of the Bishop. The father in the family always asks the adult members for their opinions and suggestions, and these members in turn help the father in managing the family. He welcomes the suggestions of others in the family. Like that, the vicar is requested to do so in his parish.”<sup>78</sup> Mar Ivanios was very much interested in religious life. He exhorted the parents and youngsters of the Church to encourage religious life and welcomed the people to Bethany and the Convent of the Daughters of Mary.<sup>79</sup>

Mar Ivanios didn’t leave out anybody in his Church from his pastoral care. Instead, he encouraged them to contribute their mite for the up building of the Church. “The Church should be a participatory Church in which no one feels excluded.” (E.A.45) Half a century ago Mar Ivanios implemented this Church teaching

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<sup>73</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter dated 6 January 1942

<sup>74</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter dated 6 January 1942

<sup>75</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter dated 15 January 1942

<sup>76</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter dated 1 June 1946

<sup>77</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter dated 1 June 1946

<sup>78</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter dated 1 June 1946

<sup>79</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral Letter dated 12 November 1946

in his community. The people of his community responded warmly and joined different ministries. "The elite groups under the leadership of Sri. A. Philipose M.A., B.L, formed an association known as *Evident Guild*, at Tiruvalla. The objective of this association was to convince the Catholic faith to the non-Catholic brethren. They conducted public meetings in different places. This was one of the major functions of the *guild*."<sup>80</sup>

Now this community has developed into a Church with five Eparchies with a large following in India and abroad. With its own theology, spirituality, liturgy and discipline the young Church became the salt of the earth and the torchbearer to her sister Churches. Like the Cappadocian Fathers, Mar Ivanios strenuously underlined 'the ontological unity of human kind beyond the distinction between men and women according to the order of creation.'

He is the father of this Church as he is a man of God experience, a *Sanyasi* a *Yogi*. He is the father of religious life in the Malankara Church. He was a great teacher and theologian. Like Moses who led the Israelites to the Promised Land he led the Malankara Church to communion with the universal Church. He pastured this Church as Saints Peter and Paul the chief apostles pastured the early Church. He is a father of the Church in the history of the Church of the modern period.<sup>81</sup>

### 3. 3. Woman as the New Eve

An awareness of the egalitarian role of women in the mission of salvation is discerned in the Malankara liturgy. While reflecting on the resurrection narratives of the Gospels, the Divine Liturgy (Sunday third hour), the faithful join with the women Disciples of Christ who were the first proclaimers of His resurrection.<sup>82</sup> The dignity and vocation of women were emphasized. Women became the central figures in the family. As in the case of the apostolic

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<sup>80</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 58-59

<sup>81</sup> BBS, *Discipleship in Jesus*, 33

<sup>82</sup> *Qyamta*, 89, 95-96



community, Mary, the Mother of God, was the centre and the second Eve. Here in the Malankara families the women became the new Eve. They had a complementary role. Mar Ivanios was not interested in giving 'some position' for women for their social upliftment, but he gave them a significant place in the heart of the Church. This we see today during the liturgical assembly of the Church. The women do not stand behind the men in the Malankara Church; rather they stand on the right side of the *haikala* (nave), of the Church, to see the resurrected Christ as the first witnesses of the resurrection. "He appointed the one side of the nave for the men, the other for the women. This so heartened and dignified the wives and mothers."<sup>83</sup> "Thus he established the equality of men and women in the churches."<sup>84</sup>

### B. 4. Women as Evangelists

We have seen that 'the moving space of the women' was limited in the Orthodox Church. But due to the reforms of Mar Ivanios the women got a wider sphere of activity and were exposed to the world. Their horizon was widened. Gradually girls started going out of the state to pursue education. They entered into a 'new way of life', i.e., religious life, which was not even heard of in the Malankara tradition. Like the women in the early Church who were missionaries and evangelists, here in this community also, women were evangelists and missionaries. The first members of the Malankara Catholic Church were religious women, members of the Bethany congregation. They were pioneers in the field of evangelisation in the Malankara Church. In short, there was a spiritual revival in the Church through them.

If we examine the vocation history of priests and the religious in the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church's history, we find a prominent common factor – the influence of their mothers in their spiritual life. The pious and dedicated women of the family, their strict observances of religious practices like morning and evening prayers, lent, pilgrimages, veneration of Mary - all these directly

<sup>83</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 63

<sup>84</sup> CHEDIATH, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 117



or indirectly influenced these people to take up their vocations. This helped the growth of vocations in the Church. In his address to the bishops of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church during their *ad limina* visit; the Holy Father Pope John Paul II spoke these words. "You have become one of the fastest growing Catholic communities in the world, boasting large numbers of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and your *pusillus grex* is home to many educational and welfare institutions. The new law of Christ which compels us to go beyond the boundaries of family, race, tribe or nation is concretely manifested in your generosity to others (cf. Mt 5: 44)."<sup>85</sup>

### 3. 5. Position of Women in the Malankara Catholic Church Today

On September 20, 1930, Aloysius Maria Benziger, the Bishop of Kollam, received Mar Ivanios and a few representatives into the Catholic communion. The following day all the Bethany Sisters were received into the Catholic communion by Mar Ivanios.<sup>86</sup> This heralded the beginning of the Ivanian era in the Catholic Church. What Mar Ivanios began in the Orthodox Church got momentum in the Malankara Catholic Church. He pioneered the establishment of a school for girls at Nangyarkulangara.<sup>87</sup> Hostels were started for the women for better life.<sup>88</sup> He had also a plan to start a women's college. There was a correspondence on the subject,<sup>89</sup> but this remains unrealised even today.

Now the Malankara Catholic Church has developed into a Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* with five eparchies in all. Women in all these eparchies are serving in different ministries. There are elected or nominated women in all the eparchial pastoral councils. The majority of our Sunday school teachers are women. In the Malankara Syrian Catholic (MSC) Schools, nearly half of the

<sup>85</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Ad limina Apostolorum: Bishops of the Syro-Malankara Rite*, 5

<sup>86</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 27

<sup>87</sup> HELENA, *Bethany*, 100

<sup>88</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 260

<sup>89</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 261

teachers are Malankara Catholic women. In the M.S.C. Colleges also there are a good number of women teachers from the community. Formerly, the women who were totally neglected in the educational field have now become the 'social engineers' in the Malankara Church.

Many women in our community are active members of the Malankara Catholic Youth Movement (M.C.Y.M). It is the *yuvajana sabha* (youth Church) of the Malankara Catholic Church. This organization is doing commendable works within the Church and society. Some of the eparchial and national leaders of this organization are women from different eparchies. The pious associations like *Mathrusamajam* and *Legion of Mary* are exclusive organizations for women.

The main reason for establishing hostels was that Mar Ivanios had realized the importance of education and so tried to provide the facilities for education to all. He himself made all the arrangements for the higher education of women.<sup>90</sup> The Bethany Sisters and the Sisters of the Daughters of Mary in collaboration with Mar Ivanios undertook the great mission of education of the girls and young women of all creeds of the state.

Women add to the holiness of the Church by the holiness of their lives. To make the Church a more powerful instrument to witness Christ and to proclaim the gospel to the world, Mar Ivanios realized the importance of women in the family and in the Church. In his autobiography *Girideepam* he wrote that the place of God in the family and Church communities depended to a great extent on the life of women.

### 3. 6. Bethany Sisters

The religious are the heart of the Church<sup>91</sup>. "Religious life is a grace lived according to the Gospel in the Church and a gift of the Holy Sprit granted for the up-building of the ecclesial

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<sup>90</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 260

<sup>91</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 15



community.”<sup>92</sup> Bethany Sisters lead a life of prayer like Mary, a life of service like Martha and a life of bearing witness to the faith like Lazarus.<sup>93</sup> “Being the cradle of the Malankara Catholic Church, Bethany has the mission of fostering and nurturing her growth and development.”<sup>94</sup> As a dedicated member of Bethany, “the primary role of a sister is to make herself available for the spiritual renewal of the Church.”<sup>95</sup> Their prayer life includes the sacred liturgy, divine office, reception of the sacraments, meditation, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, retreat and recollection.<sup>96</sup> Bethany sisters are called upon “to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”(Lk 4:18-19)<sup>97</sup>

Together with the parishioners, the Bethany Sisters prepare the children of the parish for active participation in the liturgy and for the reception of other sacraments. While offering guidance in conducting pious associations like *Māthru Samajām* (Mothers’ Gathering) and *the Legion of Mary*, the women get an opportunity to realize their potential and become more conscious of their role and dignity in society and in the family as a wife and mother. The sisters visit families and encourage people to participate in the ecclesial life and in the prayer life of the Church. They take the leadership in conducting prayer meetings in houses or places where men and women come together to pray and share their daily problems. Sisters make use of such occasions to make women realize their role in the family, in the Church and their duties and obligations as parents.

### 3.7. The Congregation of the Daughters of Mary

During the early phase of the movement for communion with the Catholic Church, Mar Ivanios sought the help of the Syro-

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<sup>92</sup> SERENA, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 56

<sup>93</sup> *The Holy Rules of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ*, No. 5

<sup>94</sup> SERENA, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 79

<sup>95</sup> SERENA, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 80

<sup>96</sup> *The Holy Rules of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ*, No.119-176

<sup>97</sup> *The Holy Rules of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ*, No.219



Malabar Church, and many priests came to work for the Archeparchy of Trivandrum. One of the prominent priests among them was Fr. Joseph Kuzhinjālil. This young dynamic priest who worked in the southern part of Travancore realized the need for the sisters in the mission field. He revealed his aspiration to Mar Ivanios. With parental blessing Mar Ivanios gave his consent to begin a new congregation in the Malankara Catholic Church in 1938. The primary mission of the congregation was to bring the Good News to the poor and the neglected, and to concentrate on families for their integrated development.<sup>98</sup> They offer pastoral assistance in different mission stations of all the Eparchies, conduct educational institutions up to higher secondary level, organise social service programmes, establish hospitals, schools of nursing, dispensaries, hostels, vocational training centres for women and organise rehabilitation programmes for the aged, handicapped, T.B. patients, lepers and orphans.

### 3.8 An Appraisal of Mar Ivanios' Vision

The early Church was a communion of believers in Christ united by faith, hope and love. The different ministries in the community – apostles, preachers, teachers, etc. - were understood to have been established for the common good. In spite of the different gifts and charisms, all the members were regarded as equal in dignity, and the task of spreading the Gospel was the concern of all the members of the Church according to their specific vocations in life. This character was lacking in the Orthodox Church due to the infightings and lawsuits. Mar Ivanios realized that if the Church did not allow women to function freely or to exercise their distinctive gifts and endowments of the Holy Spirit, they would not develop. The result would be an improperly adapted and deharmonized Church. Because many women, and also men, the so called living stones are not properly fitted into the overall structure of the “spiritual house” (1 Pet 2:25). God’s wonderful deeds of salvation, virtues and perfection are not adequately propounded and projected to the world. So he formed a company of believers of one heart and one soul. He gave great

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<sup>98</sup> MAR IGNATIOS, *Malankara Catholic Directory* 2004, 253

importance to the dignity of women, being aware that baptism made them partakers of the benefits of redemption and members of Christ's Body. He emphasized the duty of every person without distinction, to work for the good of others according to the particular charism received. Like the early Christian community, which was a cohesive body with their leaders sharing their responsibilities, Mar Ivanios established a community of men and women without any discrimination.

## Conclusion

God created mankind in his own image as male and female, with a diversity of functions and a variety of gifts. The Bible manifests a positive attitude towards women. In the Old Testament, women occupied a predominant role as wives and mothers and also as mature individuals. They were held in high esteem for their spiritual leadership, piety, diligence and virtues. Jesus in no way negates the distinction between the sexes but rather recognized their individuality and uniqueness and treated them equally. There was very little difference in his approach to male and female. Women, like men, were equally free to talk, to follow, be friendly with, and serve Jesus. The New Testament reveals no difference in the way that men and women interacted to God or in the way that God interacted with them. In the Church, God has assigned certain tasks and forms of ministry specifically to men and women, different, yet no less important. We see the same in the family also. In the Church, women were accepted as full members of the community by baptism. They were recognised as individuals in their own rights, responsible before God for their own behaviour. No function or activity within the Church was specifically or absolutely barred for women. They could, and apparently did, play a full part in the life and worship of the Church. My brief investigation has also pointed to the prominent role the women played in the Syriac tradition, whether it be the active ministry or the spiritual and ascetical pursuits like that of the 'daughters of the covenant.' Thus, the Syriac Church taught that all baptized persons are called upon to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit that have been given to them for the building up of the Church.



Mar Ivanios, who was a scholar in Syriac and was rooted in this tradition, realized that in his community, due to lawsuits and faction fighting, the real charism of the members of the Church had deteriorated. By his personal prayers, reflection and subjection to the will of God, he formulated a series of revival measures which eventually transformed his community. He took up the task of encouraging all the members in their calling and recognized all of them as precious before the Lord. He realised that “union with God is more sublime than mere service of God.”<sup>99</sup> Because of this experience, God laid His creative hand upon him, which worked miracles in his community. He used the genius of women for their spiritual and educational revival. He had a unified vision of life. With his concrete measures and acknowledgements of the dignity and vocation of women, there was a paradigm shift in the Orthodox Church’s mode of thinking and vision. The system of occupying the right side of the *haikala* by women was indeed a revolutionary change in the liturgical celebrations and also an acceptance of their dignity.

The young women now had the courage to go beyond the four walls of the house against the existing custom, but it was calmly approved by the society. They had gone out of their house with the young priest Fr. P. T. Geevarghese to Calcutta and to Barisole for higher education and religious formation. They entered into a new way of life, which was not even heard of in the Orthodox Church in those days. These sisters were well versed in secular and religious subjects. In course of time, they became the torchbearers of the mission of their founder and entered into all ministries of the Church like that of the early Christian community. The sisters formed and gave leadership to basic Christian communities like the *prāthanayōgam* (prayer meetings). They worked as teachers in the schools and worked for ecclesial affairs. They taught children the true Christian faith and prepared them for the reception of the sacraments. They instructed the women in the *marthamariyam samājam*, in the *mathrusamājam* and in the *prarthanayōgam*, which were the official forums of the community. They visited the houses of their neighbours

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<sup>99</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61



irrespective of caste and creed. They served the poor and the needy and cared for the sick. All these ministries were alien to the Orthodox Church in those days. The Church and the public appreciated the works of Bethany and they wholeheartedly supported their ventures. These women realized their role and responsibilities in the family and in the Church alike. The mission work of the sisters in the non-Christian area was yet another path breaker of women.

According to Mar Ivanios, human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. So he kindled the spiritual gifts of the members of his community. He believed that these gifts come from the Holy Spirit and are bestowed upon individuals for the up-building of the entire Church. He accepted and encouraged the principles of diversity, unity and complementarity in his Church. There is diversity that men and women are created distinctly and differently and this fact he never negated disavowed. The unity is in that we all are one in Christ and complementarity in that we are interdependent, and each needs the other for the lives to be lived as God intends them to be. There is a role for each person in the Church to play. But this aspect had been neglected in the Orthodox Church. Mar Ivanios, with his rich Syrian tradition, empowered the women, reassured their dignity, underlined their important role in the family and in the Church. Because of these revival measures, the women became aware of their role and ministry, equipped themselves for the needs of the time, which resulted in the revival of the Orthodox Church, and abundant fruits of this are still visible in the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church.



# The Pastoral Vision of Mar Ivanios

James Ellitharayil OIC

## 0. Introduction

The term formation is defined as a process of forming something or effecting an integrated development in the totality of human beings or their society, which includes their educational, social, economic, political and religious integration. Several towering personalities arise in our communities in every country and every sphere of human activity. Only personalities like Mar Ivanios could bring about an integration of social transformation and spiritual values alike. Only once in a century, or two, such men who leave their footprints on the sands of time emerge. We call them prophets. Mar Ivanios was one like them. Amidst the tens of thousands of prelates that crowd the columns of ecclesiastical history the name of Mar Ivanios shines and shines alone as a star. He deserves the praise the world bestows on him. He was a visionary, a pioneer and a great Father of the Church. We intend to make an investigation into the socio-environmental and religio-cultural factors that had contributed to the spiritual and ecclesial formation of Mar Ivanios.

God promises his children 'shepherds' to care, gather and guide them (Jer 23:4). He entrusts them with special tasks according to the needs of the time. God called Moses and entrusted him with the special task of delivering the Israelites from the bondage of the Pharaoh to the green pastures. In the same

way, Mar Ivanios (1883-1953), a prophet of ecumenism, had a special vocation to restore peace and harmony in the Malankara Church torn asunder by rivalries and factional strife. As Moses was with God at the top of the mountain and as Moses led the Israelites to Canaan the place where honey and milk were flowing Mar Ivanios was in union with God through his ceaseless prayer-life in Bethany Ashram, and he led the Malankarites to spiritual renaissance. It was on 20 September 1930 that his dream of communion with the Catholic Church became a reality.

Mar Ivanios followed Christ, “the good shepherd” (Jn 10:11), both in his life of prayer and actions. He was a pastor who had initiated, with imagination and foresight, several projects in the spiritual, educational, cultural and social fields in India for the progress of the Malankara Church and society in general. As a good pastor, he had paid attention to the well being of his own flock but at the same time gave special care for the poor people, orphans and the members of lower class. He stretched out his arms and became an example to the people, as Jesus was his example. He was also one of the greatest Church-men who had influenced the Church and transformed the society, as a spiritual leader and social reformer. He was engaged in the multivalent dimensions of human development. However, here we deal with only two such dimensions: the spiritual and the social.

Mar Ivanios increased in divine and human favour as Jesus increased in divine and human favour (see Lk 2:52). He dedicated himself completely for the spiritual renewal of the Church and the integral development of society. He read the signs of the times and was sensitive to the needs of the society. It indicates that our involvement for the uplift and betterment of the downtrodden does not enchain us within the four walls of the church but makes our commitment open and available at the level of the secular city, for a universal brotherhood/sisterhood.

The first part of this study will analyse the evolution of Mar Ivanios’ pastoral vision, the vision of communion, and the factors that influenced him, such as the familial atmosphere, the socio-economic situation, spiritual life, ecclesial atmosphere and



personal relationships. In the second and third part we shall see some of his pastoral engagements, as a spiritual leader and as social reformer. The primary intention of his entire pastoral work was to bring the whole of humanity into this communion. We try to comprehend this unique vision of Mar Ivanios and bring out to light his contributions to the society as a spiritual leader and reformer.

## **1. The Theological Evolution of Mar Ivanios' Pastoral Vision**

Mar Ivanios, a true follower of Christ, dedicated himself fully to do the will of God. We shall now consider some of the factors that galvanized his pastoral vision. An environment of sound Christian family tradition, liturgical spirituality, socio-economic situations, personal relationship with others, especially his parents, priests and bishops, all these influenced his life. This helps us to understand the theological basis of his pastoral vision.

### **1.1. The Influence of Holy Scripture in the Life of Mar Ivanios**

The Holy Scripture is the principal book for reading in an Orthodox family. Mar Ivanios, born in an Orthodox family in Kerala was brought up in a spiritual family background, as any other Orthodox child would have been.<sup>1</sup>

The Orthodox Church has always been recommending and encouraging her faithful in reading the Holy Bible. As part of her Sunday school teachings, she has been compelling the children to learn a particular portion of the Bible everyday. Thus, when a child finishes his catechetical studies, he will be able to know the whole bible by heart or at least the important parts. Young Geevarghese was no exception to this traditional practice as is evidenced from his works and homilies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 107

<sup>2</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 108

According to Mar Ivanios, the Bible is an open letter from our Heavenly Father and through this letter, the father advises His children how they can attain Him.<sup>3</sup> He prepared sermons, instructions, discourses on the liturgy, and commentaries on scriptural passages.<sup>4</sup> His spiritual life was entirely based on the Sacred Scripture. All these indicate that Mar Ivanios imbibed a deep knowledge of the Sacred Scripture. "As we go through the seminary life of Geevarghese, it becomes very clear that he had from the very beginning developed a deep spirituality based on the Scripture."<sup>5</sup> He was not only reading and learning the Sacred Scripture but also imitating Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. "Mar Ivanios' teachings, exhortations, personal prayers, all bear witness to the same fact, that his Imitation of Christ consisted in, not merely copying the external actions of Christ, but a following that would be a even closer or vital union in spirit with Christ."<sup>6</sup> Mar Ivanios, a true follower of Christ, imitated his life of prayer and action.

In the Gospels, Jesus is presented to us as the one who prays and teaches how to pray.<sup>7</sup> The Gospel also tells us that Jesus often prayed alone. (Mt 14:23, Mk 1:35, 6:46; Lk 4:42) Jesus went to the desert in order to pursue his dialogue with the Father in solitude. Jesus prayed before every important moment of his ministry; before his transfiguration (Lk 9:28), before he chose the twelve to become his apostles (Lk 6:12), before beginning his Galilean ministry (Mk 1:35), before walking on the waters to join his disciples again (Mt 14:23), before asking his disciples again (Mt 14:23), before asking his disciples to say who he was (Lk 9:18), before teaching them how to pray (Lk 11:1) and before Peters' denial (Lk 22:31).

In Jesus' preaching, he clearly outlined an obligation on the part of the children of God to treat all others as brothers and

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<sup>3</sup> See MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 110

<sup>4</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 12

<sup>5</sup> NARIMATTAHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 33

<sup>6</sup> See MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 69

<sup>7</sup> MORISSETTE, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 101

sisters.<sup>8</sup> In his life, we see Jesus in constant contact with the scribes and pharisees, but above all with the people of the land, with outcasts, sinners, and tax collectors.<sup>9</sup> Jesus was very much in touch with what was happening in the society of his time. A large number of people were considered “out-caste” by their fellow citizens; many were sick and dejected.<sup>10</sup> He gave them hope and responded according to their need. “Jesus did not only denounce what was going wrong in society and individuals, but he also helped people to realize that a better world was in the making, if only they were ready to repent and start a new life.”<sup>11</sup> In his lifetime, the Jews would never have allowed a woman to play a leadership role in society. However, Jesus gave them much more importance than his contemporaries did.<sup>12</sup>

In order to imitate Jesus in the Gospel, Mar Ivanios spent long hours of prayer in the wilderness of Perunad.<sup>13</sup> His prayer life played a great role in his pastoral life.<sup>14</sup> “By means of prayer, meditation, examination of conscience, confession, Holy Eucharist and communion, practice of the presence of God, mortifications, good intentions and practice of Christian virtues, he lived in Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> Mar Ivanios rose at midnight to chant the divine praises and spent many long hours in meditation both in the morning and evening.<sup>16</sup> He said that the Christian and religious perfection should consist in imitating Christ both in his life of prayer and life of action.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See GS 32.

<sup>9</sup> TAYLOR, *The life and Ministry of Jesus*, 69

<sup>10</sup> MORISSETTE, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 54

<sup>11</sup> MORISSETTE, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 54

<sup>12</sup> MORISSETTE, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 49

<sup>13</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 73

<sup>14</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 73

<sup>15</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 135

<sup>16</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, *Mar Ivanios and the Re-union movement*, 263

<sup>17</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 72



## 1.2. A Glimpse of Mar Ivanios' Life in the Orthodox Church

Mar Ivanios was a man chosen by God 'from the womb of his mother.' Born in the Orthodox Church, he dedicated his life to the spiritual renewal of the community. The constant disputes between the *Bavakakshi*<sup>18</sup> and *Metrankakshi*,<sup>19</sup> which "were carried through several law courts and through public demonstration and pamphleteering, costing much money and human effort is a long story."<sup>20</sup> The spiritual life of the Malankara Church had become arid and morally degraded due to never ending litigations, hatred, power politics and internal fights. All these sadly affected the morale of the Church and reduced its spiritual power.<sup>21</sup> This deplorable condition of the Orthodox Church caused great anguish in Fr. P.T. Geevarghese (later Mar Ivanios), and he founded the Bethany Ashram at Mundanmala, Perunad on 15 August 1919 with the aim of being a powerhouse for the spiritual renaissance of the Malankara Church. His deep and solid spirituality, which he attained in the Orthodox Church, especially through the Bethany Ashram, was the source and power of his pastoral life. The Bethany Ashram became the centre of spiritual and liturgical activities in the Orthodox Church, and it helped the spiritual renewal of the Church and later became an instrument in the hands of God for the communion of the Malankara Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church.

### 1.2.1. Persons Who Influenced the Life of Mar Ivanios

Mar Ivanios was so lucky that he could grow up in an atmosphere that was very conducive to make him a man of God in the modern world. The good examples of his parents, relatives, teachers, priests and others enkindled in him a burning desire to dedicate himself completely to the will of God. His mother, Anna Panicker, was a pious woman who had instilled in him in

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<sup>18</sup> The group that declared allegiance to the Patriarch of Antioch

<sup>19</sup> The group that declared allegiance to the Metropolitan of the Malankara Church

<sup>20</sup> VARGHESE, *The History of the Christian Churches in India*, 46

<sup>21</sup> VARGHESE, *The History of the Christian Churches in India*, 100

childhood itself the idea of Catholic communion.<sup>22</sup> Fr. Skaria Panicker, the elder brother of his father, also influenced Mar Ivanios to a great extent. He was a devoted and zealous priest who had chosen a celibate life. It was this dedicated, celibate priest who held up to Geevarghese the ideal of the monastic life.<sup>23</sup> Vattasseril Mar Dionysius, the Head of the Malankara Church was another most important person who had influenced the life of Mar Ivanios. He was more than a spiritual mentor to Fr. P.T. Geevarghese.<sup>24</sup> “He was a father figure and teacher extraordinaire.”<sup>25</sup> As a good master, Mar Dionysius loved his disciple and this “relationship of master and pupil that existed between them was indeed attractive.”<sup>26</sup> His simple and saintly life was highly attractive to Mar Ivanios, and he imitated his master.

### 1.2.2. The Factors That Influenced the Life of Mar Ivanios

One of the prime institutions that belonged to the Orthodox Church in Kottayam was Mar Dionysius (M.D.) Seminary English High School. Geevarghese *Semmāssan* (Deacon), later Mar Ivanios, was temporarily appointed headmaster of this school. As a deacon in the Malankara Church, *Semmāssan* proved himself a good educationist and an orator. One of his favorite and most popular topics was the Sacraments, and he was lovingly referred to as *Koodasha* (Sacrament) *Semmāssan*.<sup>27</sup> Through this, his ultimate aim was to create a new atmosphere of revival in the Malankara Church.<sup>28</sup> In order to fulfil this aim he dedicated his life.

He visited the lower castes' homes. They never enjoyed any kind of freedom in their lives and were even deprived of the privilege of wearing clean and white clothes. They were neither

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<sup>22</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 31

<sup>23</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 5

<sup>24</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 58

<sup>25</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 58

<sup>26</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 34

<sup>27</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 25-26

<sup>28</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 34

allowed to walk freely on the roads nor worship in a temple.<sup>29</sup> Fr. Geevarghese felt challenged because of such divisions and untouchability in the society, even among the baptized themselves. He said, "Society has to change, and we have to work toward that end."<sup>30</sup> He was called to take up the professorship in Serampore College in Culcutta.<sup>31</sup> "The doors of the famous Serampore University were opening its doors to the first professor from Malankara."<sup>32</sup> His life in Serampore and his intimate relationship with Dr. Howels, the principal of the college was a turning point in his life.<sup>33</sup> Here he practised a monastic way of life<sup>34</sup> and it was the beginning stage of his religious congregation. All these factors greatly influenced his life, and those helped him to become a good administrator, a good educationist, a man of prayer and a social reformer.

### 1.3. Catholic and Protestant Influence in the life of Mar Ivanios

When he was an Orthodox priest, he accepted the universality of the Catholic Church and he said it was only in the Catholic Church that the scripture is fulfilled.<sup>35</sup> He read a good deal of literature on most of the important schools of spirituality in the Catholic Church and was greatly inspired by it. He was inspired by the life of St. Basil, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Francis de Sales. Mar Ivanios expressed this in his speech at the first anniversary of his communion with the Catholic Church.

My study of early Christianity helped me to appreciate the sanctity and beauty of the lives of men dedicated to God in the Religious life. I thought that the model of St. Basil, the great founder of organized monastic life in the

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<sup>29</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 28

<sup>30</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 29

<sup>31</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 43

<sup>32</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 91

<sup>33</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 43

<sup>34</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 67

<sup>35</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 19



East, would satisfy the aspirations of an oriental mind; but I continued my study of the lives of other saints, both Eastern and Western. If I found St. Basil laying great stress upon Religious Chastity (interpreted widely) as the foundation of the monastic life, St. Francis of Assisi seemed pointing to Holy Poverty as its basis, and St. Ignatius Loyola seemed teaching that Religious Obedience, which means living in the closest possible union with God, enabling the perfect accomplishment of His Holy will, was the be-all and end-all of the means of attaining perfection. St. Benedict, however, regarded stability as so fundamental to the Religious state as to make it one of the four vows of Religion. And as if to crown all, came St. Francis De Sales, teaching that the sanctification of the common actions of every day life was indispensable to the attainment of sanctity in the Religious life – nay, in any life.<sup>36</sup>

Among all the Catholic saints, Mar Ivanios was very much attracted by the writings of St. Basil the Great. St. Basil was a great contemplative and a man of prayer. He is considered among the eight fathers of the Church. He was a great theologian, a good administrator and an organizer. St. Basil's great concern was the unity of the Church and he taught against semi-Arianism.<sup>37</sup> He soon gave up teaching to dedicate himself entirely to the service of God. He retired to the desert and was joined by his companions.<sup>38</sup> For him, the monastic life was a communal one, as giving the framework of a perfect Christian life of brotherly love and care with the asceticism of service and humility, and penitence for sin.<sup>39</sup> "The work was agricultural and craft, but there was an orphanage attached to the monastery, together with a hospital and workshops for the unemployed poor."<sup>40</sup> Mar Ivanios was inspired by the life of St. Basil.<sup>41</sup> Together with some of his clerics he later

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<sup>36</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *The Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary*, 3

<sup>37</sup> RUSSEL, *Glimpses of the Fathers of the Church*, 162

<sup>38</sup> RUSSEL, *Glimpses of the Fathers of the Church*, 162

<sup>39</sup> KNOWLES, *Christian Monasticism*, 21

<sup>40</sup> KNOWLES, *Christian Monasticism*, 21

<sup>41</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual life of Mar Ivanios*, 34

started a quasi-monastic life at Serampore adopting the rule of St. Basil with whatever modifications circumstances demanded.<sup>42</sup>

The mission works of St. Francis Xavier in India also attracted Mar Ivanios. Once he said, "I am sorry I cannot pray to Xavier because I am not a Catholic."<sup>43</sup> "The main Catholic source referred by Fr. P.T. Geevarghese was that of the Society of Jesus. His relations with the Jesuits came mostly through their parish church at Serampore."<sup>44</sup> With the students of his own Church Fr. P.T. Geevarghese used to go there to attend Holy mass.<sup>45</sup> He also regularly visited the Fathers of the Society of Jesus and studied many books regarding religious vows and constitutions.<sup>46</sup>

In order to acquire the knowledge of religious congregations Mar Ivanios met members of various religious congregations of the Roman Catholic Church and High Church missionaries.<sup>47</sup> "He drew many of his ideas about religious life from the Fathers of the Oxford mission."<sup>48</sup> He triggered a growing co-operation between the Orthodox and the Protestants in the educational field.<sup>49</sup> Mother Edith, a nun of the Oxford Mission was another person who influenced his spiritual character and she led him swiftly to the fulfilment of his early aspiration to become a monk.<sup>50</sup>

#### 1.4. The Influence of Prayer and Ascetical Practices

Mar Ivanios was a man of prayer who had imitated Christ in thought, word and deed; to the extent it was possible for him. Through his incessant prayers, he experienced God and lived an

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<sup>42</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 21

<sup>43</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 19

<sup>44</sup> NARIMATTAHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 64

<sup>45</sup> NARIMATTAHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Pastor and Prophet*, 64

<sup>46</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 67

<sup>47</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 66-67

<sup>48</sup> HAMBYE, *The Syrian Jacobites in India*, 118

<sup>49</sup> HAMBYE, *The Syrian Jacobites in India*, 118

<sup>50</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 20

authentic life as a true disciple of Jesus. “He rose at midnight to chant the Divine Office.”<sup>51</sup>

Mar Ivanios clearly expressed the necessity of fasting in his Holy Rule: Fasting is absolutely necessary in order to fight against the hostile forces, to repulse all the attacks of demons and to practice virtue.<sup>52</sup> He adopted the middle path that virtue lies in the middle. In the Antiochene liturgy, prayer and vigil characterize the Lenten season. Especially in the Great Lenten season, many fast from midnight to noon. The Holy Week is spent almost entirely in the Church with severe fasting and prayer. Fasting implies perfect abstinence from fish, meat, egg, milk and milk products. Mar Ivanios strictly observed all these practices in his own life. He was convinced of the necessity of practising mortification of the exterior senses as well as of interior passions.<sup>53</sup> His prayer life was closely related to fasting. Needless to say that all these had played a significant role in the formation of his spiritual life. Mar Ivanios instructed the faithful to follow all these practices in their life too.<sup>54</sup> In short, the people in the Malankara Church found deep spirituality in the life of Mar Ivanios.

### 1.5. The Impact of Liturgical Life on Mar Ivanios

Liturgy is the re-enactment and actualisation of the whole mystery of Christ in time and space through signs and symbols. Through the liturgy, the Christian lives with Christ, walks with Him and prays with Him. The whole life of the Church revolves around the liturgy. The entire liturgical life revolves around the sacrifice and sacraments (SC 6). The salvific action of Jesus reaches us today in the visibility of the Church, particularly in the liturgical celebration.<sup>55</sup> The active and genuine participation in the liturgical celebration is *sine qua non* because “it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true

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<sup>51</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 32

<sup>52</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Bethany Meshihānukaranasabha*, 4

<sup>53</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 74, 75, 125

<sup>54</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral letter, 1942

<sup>55</sup> KUNCHERAKKATT, *Liturgical Celebrations: Relevant to Life?*, 25



Christian spirit.”(SC 14) Through the liturgy “God speaks to His people, and Christ is still proclaiming his Gospel.” (SC 33)

### 1.5.1. Malankara Liturgy and Spirituality

The Malankara liturgy is deeply rooted in Biblical revelation and the mysteries of the Christian faith are disclosed in the light of scriptural teaching.<sup>56</sup> The sanctifying function of the Holy Spirit is very clearly attested in the Malankara sacramental liturgies. So, when one actively participates in the liturgical worship, one is led to become more and more aware of the presence of the Spirit and of its sanctifying presence both in oneself and in the community, preparing one to encounter God.<sup>57</sup>

One of the significant characteristics of the Malankara spirituality is that it is basically liturgical. One receives his religious character and spiritual sustenance from the liturgy in the Church.<sup>58</sup> This liturgical spirituality is the means for deification, the goal of spiritual life and the ultimate aim of Christian life. “Deification is a call to participate in the holiness of God.”<sup>59</sup> The work of the Holy Spirit is the basis of this liturgical spirituality.<sup>60</sup> Through the liturgical celebration, “the Spirit brings about the deification of the Christians and fosters it so as to transform the adopted sonship into a deeper reality.”<sup>61</sup> Through our active participation in the liturgy, God liberates us from our sins and pours out His spirit on us, so that we can carry on the liberating mission of our Lord Jesus who went about healing and doing good (Acts 10:38).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 122

<sup>57</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 63

<sup>58</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 46

<sup>59</sup> PALLIKUNNEL, *Integration and Deification*, 110

<sup>60</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Heritage of the Syrian Church*, 124

<sup>61</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Beauty of the House*, 62

<sup>62</sup> KUNCHERAKKATT, *Liturgical Celebrations: Relevant to Life?* 33

### 1.5.2. Liturgical Spirituality of Mar Ivanios

Mar Ivanios was an ardent lover of liturgy. Liturgy for him was the source and foundation of his spirituality. His liturgical life played a prominent role in the formation of his spiritual life.<sup>63</sup> He ‘actively participated’ and ‘meaningfully involved’ in the liturgical celebrations, and it helped him to become more sensitive to the needs of others and inspired him to work for the liberation of the children of God. Through his liturgical spirituality, he attained deification, and its effects were seen in his pastoral life. In this deification, God fashioned him for His works to renew the Church and to transform the society.

In the Malankara Eucharistic liturgy, especially in the preparatory service, the celebrant prays for his own purification.<sup>64</sup> He also prays for the rich and the poor, the orphans and the widows, the weary and the oppressed.<sup>65</sup> There are many prayers for peace and harmony in the world.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, when he came out of the church he imbibed and lived what he had heard, prayed and experienced in the liturgy.<sup>67</sup> The liturgical spirituality of Mar Ivanios enabled him to be sensitive to the needs of his fellow beings, and he tried to establish a better society built on love, peace, justice and freedom.

Since Malankara spirituality is based on the liturgy, Mar Ivanios took special care for the sacramental and liturgical life of the faithful. He taught them the importance of the sacraments for Christian life in increasing the faith of the recipient.<sup>68</sup> This catechetical instruction was meaningful for the faithful, and so they actively participated in the liturgical services.<sup>69</sup> “He was very keen in forming the future priests in line with the liturgical

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<sup>63</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual life of Mar Ivanios*, 124

<sup>64</sup> ABRAHAM, *The Divine Liturgy of the Syrian Malankara Church*, 11

<sup>65</sup> ABRAHAM, *The Divine Liturgy of the Syrian Malankara Church*, 11

<sup>66</sup> ABRAHAM, *The Divine Liturgy of the Syrian Malankara Church*, 13

<sup>67</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 119

<sup>68</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 219

<sup>69</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 42

spirituality of the Church”<sup>70</sup> in order that they give leadership to the faithful. Mar Ivanios realized that “the protection of the liturgical identity will help to enhance the spiritual life of the children of the Malankara Church and to come closer in the areas of unity with the Orthodox – Jacobite churches.”<sup>71</sup>

## 1.6. Theological Basis of Mar Ivanios’ Pastoral Engagements

Mar Ivanios was a pastor who with imagination and foresight initiated several projects in the spiritual, educational, cultural and social fields for the integral growth of the Church and of society. He enriched the Church with his spiritual insights (deposit) and reshaped society with his broad prophetic vision. His pastoral vision, which is called the vision of communion, was the basis of all his pastoral activities.

### 1.6.1. His Vision on Trinitarian Communion

“God is not a single person, loving Himself alone, not a self-contained monad, but He is triunity: three equal persons, each one dwelling in the other two by virtue of an increasing movement of mutual love.”<sup>72</sup> The Trinity and its ‘reciprocal communion’<sup>73</sup> are the highest exemplar and source of communion (UR 2). Mar Ivanios’ teaching on the Trinity is that there are three persons in God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each of these three is fully and completely God. None is more or less God than the others. Each possesses the entire Godhead in its totality. These three persons are one essence having one nature. Therefore God is not three but one.<sup>74</sup> In order to substantiate it, he used the liturgical hymns of

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<sup>70</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 35

<sup>71</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 129

<sup>72</sup> WARE, *The Orthodox Way*, 33

<sup>73</sup> BOFF, *Holy Trinity*, 3

<sup>74</sup> SULGA, *Mar Ivanios Pithāvinṭe Prasangangal*, 9



B'outho of Mar Ephrem in the evening prayer of the Malankara liturgy:

*Praise to thee, who art our best  
One true God and one alone;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
One alone though Trinity.*

He further elucidated the mutual surrender and reciprocal communion of the three persons.<sup>75</sup> As per his definition of Trinitarian communion, none is before or after, or superior or inferior, or higher or lower, to the other, rather each person enwraps the others, that is, all permeate one another and live in one another.<sup>76</sup>

According to Mar Ivanios, all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God the Trinity.<sup>77</sup> Since we are made after the image of God the Trinity, we are called to reproduce on earth the mystery of mutual love that the Trinity lives in heaven.<sup>78</sup> Here there are no divisions, conflicts, suppression and inequality but only perfect harmony, love, peace, equality and joy. He was convinced that because of the Blessed Trinity, human beings are called to maintain relationship of communion with all, giving and receiving, and together building a rich and open shared life, one that respects differences and does good to all human kind.<sup>79</sup> All these convictions motivated him to bring equality, peace and harmony in the Church. Moreover, he respected all with human dignity and thus tried to bring equality and justice. Indigenous religious congregations, educational institutions, orphanages, hospitals, welfare activities for the poor, lower class and oppressed were the means for the materialisation of his pastoral vision sustained by his vision of communion.

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<sup>75</sup> SULGA, *Mar Ivanios Pithāvinte Prasangangal*, 9

<sup>76</sup> SULGA, *Mar Ivanios Pithāvinte Prasangangal*, 9-10

<sup>77</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 149

<sup>78</sup> WARE, *The Orthodox Way*, 49

<sup>79</sup> SULGA, *Mar Ivanios Pithāvinte Prasangangal*, 9-10. See also BOFF, *Holy Trinity*, 2.

### 1.6.2. Mar Ivanios' Vision of Communion on the Ecclesial Level

As a spiritual leader, this vision of communion inspired him to dedicate himself for communion within Christianity and especially with the Catholic Church. Because of his ceaseless prayer, meditation and studies, he became fully aware of the weakness of the Orthodox Church and became convinced that spirituality was an effective consolidating solution. He succeeded in this endeavour by founding religious congregations for which he had an irresistible craving right from his childhood.<sup>80</sup> His studies helped him to perceive that the Malankara Orthodox Church lacked something, which was very essential to the very framework of Christianity.<sup>81</sup> At last, after continuous prayer and discernment he perceived that 'that something' was the divine established centre of unity for the Church.<sup>82</sup>

He was convinced that "schism is a horrible sin,"<sup>83</sup> and it affects the seamless robe of Christ (UR 13), and also openly contradicts the will of Christ (UR 1) who wanted his followers be one (Jn 17:21). He was aware that divisions inflicted many wounds in the Mystical Body of Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>84</sup> In order to heal those wounds<sup>85</sup> he decided to have the fullest communion with Mother Church.<sup>86</sup> Thus, Mar Ivanios united the divided and he experienced the heavenly joy of communion with the Catholic Church.<sup>87</sup> He was convinced that this joy of communion is unattainable so long as one stays away from this communion.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, he desired that others too experience the same in their life. With this conviction, he dedicated his entire life for the re-

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<sup>80</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 5

<sup>81</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 3

<sup>82</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 3

<sup>83</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5

<sup>84</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5

<sup>85</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5

<sup>86</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 4

<sup>87</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5

<sup>88</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 4

union movement, and thus he became the prophet and pioneer of ecumenism in the history of the Church.

### 1.6.3. Mar Ivanios' Vision of Communion in the Social Level

Mar Ivanios was fully convinced that all human beings are the children of God since they are created in the image and likeness of God. This conviction motivated him to see Christ in the poor, the destitute, the marginalized and in the oppressed, and he tried to liberate them. The depressed and the oppressed classes in the society were systematically exploited and repressed for centuries by the upper castes in India.<sup>89</sup> As a social reformer, his vision of communion motivated him to eradicate untouchability, suppression, inequality, and injustice, from society. In order to accomplish this vision, his ultimate mission was to bring all human beings into the mainstream of society. With this great intention, he used education as a powerful instrument to eliminate the divisions and oppressions in the society. Thus, Mar Ivanios included the excluded, the marginalized, the lonely and the little ones and the suppressed (Lk 4:18, Mt 11:16) into the human community. He respected them with human dignity and loved them as his own brethren.<sup>90</sup>

In short, all his pastoral missions, based on the pastoral vision, were primarily focused on communion and carried out evangelisation through spiritual renewal, and social transformation through education. His dream for the spiritual renewal of the Church was realized through the foundation of indigenous religious congregations, proclamation of the word of God and spiritual classes especially on the sacraments. Educational institutions and their benefits for the poor and the oppressed, orphanages, hospitals and welfare activities for the poor were the means he utilized for social transformation.

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<sup>89</sup> VARGHESE, *The History of the Christian Churches in India*, 161

<sup>90</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 116; ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 91



## 2. Pastoral Engagements of Mar Ivanios as a Spiritual Leader

In this topic we shall consider some of his pastoral activities, which were entirely based on his pastoral vision, that is the vision of communion. The primary intention of his pastoral activities was to bring the whole of humanity into communion. As a spiritual leader, Mar Ivanios was sensitive to the spiritual needs of his community, and he dedicated his life completely for the spiritual renewal of the same. His deep and solid spirituality was the source of his pastoral life. With his leadership, there was a revival in almost every sphere of life in the Malankara Church.

### 2.1. Mar Ivanios and the Proclamation of the Word of God

The Word of God is the basic nourishment of the soul. The most important responsibility of Christianity is to proclaim the Word of God. It is the vocation of every Christian (Mk 3: 14). The motto of this proclamation is to give witness to Jesus Christ in the world. Mar Ivanios said, "The most important duty of the Christian Church is to spread the Gospel."<sup>91</sup> The content of his proclamation was primarily based on Gospel themes and their practical application.<sup>92</sup>

Mar Ivanios' intention to proclaim the Gospel was not confined to the Malankara Church alone but moved beyond it.<sup>93</sup> He strongly believed and was convinced that spreading the Gospel was absolutely necessary for the glory of God.<sup>94</sup> When he was in the seminary, he utilized every free moment to "prepare sermons, instructions, discourses on the liturgy, and commentaries on scriptural passages."<sup>95</sup> He proclaimed the Good News to the faithful to nourish them with that spiritual food. His preaching

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<sup>91</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 56

<sup>92</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 14

<sup>93</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 57

<sup>94</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 56

<sup>95</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 12

had a tremendous effect on the people because it came from his heart and not merely from his lips. On several occasions a large crowd had gathered from different parts, and some “men climbed earthen fences, youth hung from branches of trees”<sup>96</sup> to listen to his preaching. In the Malankara Church, both in the Orthodox Church and in the Catholic Church, he gave paramount importance to the proclamation of the Word of God. His entire life was based on the Word of God and he proclaimed the Good News not only in different parts of Kerala but all over the world to nourish the faithful.<sup>97</sup> He received the Word of God as his spiritual food, intensified it, experienced its strength, and lived it out, and thus he himself became the messenger of God. Consequently, his words and deeds and even his mere presence was a proclamation of the Word of God.

## **2.2. Mar Ivanios and the Spiritual Renewal in the Malankara Church**

The pastoral vision of Mar Ivanios became a source of spiritual renewal in the Church and social reformation in the society. Bethany Ashram that he founded became the source of spiritual strength for the Malankara Church. Mar Ivanios, as a spiritual leader, intended to form the faithful in the true Christian spirit. He taught them the importance of the sacraments of Christian life in increasing the faith of the recipients.<sup>98</sup>

### **2.2.1. Indigenous Religious Congregation for Men**

As we have seen above, the spiritual life of the Malankara Church had become arid and morally degrading due to court cases and hatred, power politics and internal fights. This spiritual degradation and degeneration of the Malankara Church wounded Mar Ivanios’ heart and he prayed: “Jesus Christ, O God, bring peace and tranquillity to your Holy Church, protect it lovingly, so

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<sup>96</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 14

<sup>97</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 51

<sup>98</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 219

that there may not arise in it, quarrels and lawsuits.”<sup>99</sup> He realized the need for spiritual renewal in his community. “He started a religious revival through prayer and penance. He believed that through these spiritual forces, he could restore the spiritual status of the faithful, which had been lost.”<sup>100</sup> His mind passed through various stages of transition before it reached its final vision. Day in and day out, he prayed and meditated in order to know the will of God. In his union with God he realized that the union with God is more sublime than the service of God.<sup>101</sup> At last, he came to realize that only a life of strict asceticism could capture the heart of India for Christian life.<sup>102</sup> He was determined to start an Order, contemplative and active at the same time, in true harmony with Christian principles and bearing the true stamp of Indian culture.<sup>103</sup> This was the first time that an organized endeavour was made to identify Christian religious life with that of Indian asceticism, and it was also the first of its kind in the history of the Malabar Jacobite Church that there arose a religious order for men and women.<sup>104</sup>

The name of the indigenous religious congregation he founded is “The Order of the Imitation of Christ.” It is popularly called Bethany Ashram.<sup>105</sup> ‘Bethany’, the name extracted from the Bible, means ‘house of consolation’ and ‘Ashram’ is the dwelling place, where a *sanyāsi* or a monk in India practices prayer and asceticism. The charism of the Order of the Imitation of Christ is following Jesus Christ in his life of prayer and action, realized in Oriental monastic tradition and Indian *sanyāsa* and aimed at the evangelisation of India through the spiritual renewal of the Malankara Church.<sup>106</sup> True to the Indian ideal, Fr. P.T. Geevarghese pitched this *sanyāsa* ashram in an isolated area called

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<sup>99</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 41

<sup>100</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 23

<sup>101</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

<sup>102</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 58-62

<sup>103</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, *Mar Ivanios and the Re-Union Movement*, 262

<sup>104</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, *Mar Ivanios and the Re-Union Movement*, 262

<sup>105</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No.1

<sup>106</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No.4



*Mundanmala*, Perunnadu near Ranni. He chose 'Kāvi' (saffron) colour of the Hindu holy man (*sanyāsi*) for the dress of the members; they were to wear wooden sandals and a small black cross-hung on their chest. Like our Indian *sanyāsis*, their diet was strictly vegetarian. Fr. P.T. Geevarghese had undertaken the task of soliciting alms from door to door, reaching out a begging bowl like any Hindu mendicant.<sup>107</sup> The structure, nature and construction of these Ashrams were identical with that of Hindu Ashrams. The integration of the Christian faith with the rich Indian traditions was the secret behind all the success of his apostolic activities.

The austere, humble and simple life of the monks attracted the neighbouring villagers. The monks conducted catechetical classes for children, youth and adults, as also retreats, preached sermons and arranged many conferences in all the parishes. Many people sought advice and direction from the Bethany religious.<sup>108</sup> All these spiritual activities brought about drastic changes in the ecclesial and liturgical life of the Malankara Church. "By this time Bethany was at the apex of its glory and there was a revival in nearly every sphere of life in the Jacobite Church."<sup>109</sup> Thus, Bethany Ashram became the centre of spiritual and liturgical activities, and a place of pilgrimage and shelter for the faithful, in the Malankara Church. "The immediate result of the renewal effected through the Ashram led Mar Ivanios to think that its full growth would be possible only if it is brought into the Catholic communion."<sup>110</sup> He accomplished this 'Communion' and led others into this heavenly joy. If 3 January 1653 (Division) was the most sorrowful day in the annals of the Church in India, 20 September 1930 (Communion with the Catholic Church) was its most glorious day.

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<sup>107</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 33

<sup>108</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, *Mar Ivanios and the Re-Union Movement*, 263

<sup>109</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, *Mar Ivanios and the Re-Union Movement*, 264

<sup>110</sup> NARIMATTAHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 107

### 2.2.2. Indigenous Religious Congregation for Women

The establishment of a religious congregation for women within the Orthodox Church was one of his great pastoral achievements. It was his long cherished goal to establish an order of nuns in the Malankara Church. Mar Ivanios came to realize that the services of dedicated nuns are essential for the progress of the Malankara Church, not only because they could facilitate the work that men religious could do, but also because it is the attitude of the women that enrich the family and the Church. He knew that convents are inevitable for the spiritual growth and educational development of any society. In order to encourage and help some girls who had a vocation and desire for religious life,<sup>111</sup> Mar Ivanios decided to “send his first Bethany Sisters to be trained at Barisol, Bengal, by the sisters of the Oxford Mission.”<sup>112</sup>

In the history of the Malankara Church, a congregation for women was never established before because the ancient law of the Jacobite Church forbade the forming of religious houses for women. Nevertheless, when Fr. P.T. Geevarghese became Bishop, he founded a religious house for nuns on 8 September 1925 in the Malankara Church.<sup>113</sup> The first three members of this congregation professed their vows on 21 September 1925.<sup>114</sup> These sisters followed the same rule as that of the monks, and like them combined the active and the contemplative life. The betterment of the Christian women was the motive behind the establishment of the women’s congregation since women in the Malankara Church were at the lower strata in matters of education.<sup>115</sup> He was convinced that women had an important role in the formation of good Christian families. This congregation is presently involved in the unification of the Christian brethren, proclamation of the Word of God among the people of other religions or faiths, emancipation of women, education, charitable works, caring for

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<sup>111</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 65, 66, 142

<sup>112</sup> HAMBYE, *The Syrian Jacobites in India*, 118

<sup>113</sup> SERENA, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 67

<sup>114</sup> ANNIYIL, *Punaraikyathinte Ādyakālangal*, XXV

<sup>115</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 63



the orphans and the poor, evangelisation through the press and social works.<sup>116</sup> By doing all these activities, Bethany Convent fulfils the dream of its illustrious founder.

### 2.3. Mar Ivanios and Communion Movement

Christian life is primarily a call to live a life of communion - a communion with the triune God and a communion with the mystical body of Jesus Christ. Mar Ivanios realized it and he completely dedicated his life to this call. His ecumenical aim was to bring all the divided St. Thomas Christians into the unity of "one fold and one shepherd" as it existed prior to the sixteenth century in Kerala.<sup>117</sup> His ardent desire for Church unity is clearly expressed by him immediately after his consecration as the Bishop of Bethany in the Orthodox Church.<sup>118</sup>

"Mar Ivanios became convinced that our Lord founded only one Church and that was the Catholic Church to which all the faithful are to be united. It was his conviction and faith achieved through prayerful study and reflection, that the Pope is the centre of unity for Christendom."<sup>119</sup> This conviction led him to the conclusion that "no man, sincerely believing in the Divine maternity of our Lady and trusting in her guidance, can long remain outside, the pale of the Catholic Church where alone we have the unity of faith and assurance of salvation."<sup>120</sup>

Mar Ivanios strongly believed that the Holy Spirit who brings about the marvellous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ is the principal cause of the Church's unity. He said that he was a "humble instrument"<sup>121</sup> in the hands of God for "bringing several of his erring children into

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<sup>116</sup> *The Holy Rules of Sisters of the Imitation of Christ*, No. 221

<sup>117</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 176

<sup>118</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 176

<sup>119</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 134

<sup>120</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 1 He was speaking on the occasion of the combined celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> centenary of the Council of Ephesus and the first anniversary of his communion with the Catholic Church.

<sup>121</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5



the True Church.”<sup>122</sup> From all these words it becomes very clear that, according to Mar Ivanios, union of churches is not man’s achievement, rather it is the active work of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of peace, unity and love

Mar Ivanios realized the will of God and was strongly convinced that communion with the Mother Church is the only remedy to heal “the wounds of the Mystical body of our Lord Jesus.”<sup>123</sup> He found peace, contentment and happiness in the Holy Roman Catholic Church<sup>124</sup> and desired that others too experience the same joy through their communion with her. Day in and day out he worked for it and prayed:

Bring forth, Lord our God, peace and tranquillity in your Church. Guard it in your love and kindness that feuds and fights may not touch its heart. Keep it in the shade of your saving cross. Lord, stretch forth your holy hands and bless your Church. Enlighten, Lord, its eyes to see your face. Lord our redeemer; help your Church to know that, to do your will itself is its mission and commitment.<sup>125</sup>

The motto of his Episcopate spelt out in his insignia was *Ut Omnes Unum Sint* -“that they all may be one” (Jn 17:11), the prayer of Jesus Christ. Mar Ivanios strenuously worked towards the fulfilment of this motto till the end of his life. Hence, Pope John Paul II in his allocution to the Malankara Catholic bishops during their *Ad limina* visit in 2003 referred to Mar Ivanios as “a tireless apostle for unity.”<sup>126</sup>

Mar Ivanios’ entry into the Catholic Church was a real communion, and thus he opened a glorious chapter in the history of the Church. “Unlike so many re-unions with Rome in the course

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<sup>122</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5

<sup>123</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5

<sup>124</sup> GEORGE, The Malankara Syrian Rite, 114

<sup>125</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 41

<sup>126</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Ad Limina Apostolorum: Bishops of the Syro-Malankara Rite*, 5

of history, this movement is distinguished as an entirely religious one, without any element of political, social, or other temporal consideration in it.”<sup>127</sup> His self-sacrificing attitude towards truth is well manifested in the communion movement, and he expressed it to his close friend T. M. Kuriakose.

Once Mr. T. M. Kuriakose, a close companion of Mar Ivanios, asked him ‘Why did you become a Catholic? You would have been even a Patriarch if you were in the Jacobite Church.’ Mar Ivanios humbly replied ‘I like to be a small fish in a big pond. I do not want to be a big fish in a small pond.’<sup>128</sup>

It shows that truth was more important than his personal achievement and he was ready to sacrifice everything for it. Mar Ivanios opened the doors wide and paved the way for the full communion between the Malankara Church and the Catholic Church. The conflict between the two factions of the Malankara Orthodox Church still continues unabated with hatred and litigations reigning supreme. It is a counter witness to Christ and it inflicts wounds to the body of Christ. In this deplorable condition, the Malankara Catholic Church has a primary duty to provide leadership for unity among St. Thomas Christians. Since the communion of Churches is the will of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, we have to pray and work as Mar Ivanios prayed and worked.

## **2.4. Mar Ivanios and the Participation of the Laity in the Church**

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the equality of every member of the Church and said that the lay people are not to be considered less holy than the priests or religious (LG 40). To quote the Council: “It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love.”(LG 40) The lay apostolate is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church (LG 33). “Before Vatican-II the Church had the pyramid structure with the

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<sup>127</sup> ATTWATER, *The Malankarese*, 179

<sup>128</sup> An Interview Report on ‘Mar Ivanios Visions’, 5

Pope at the apex and the laity especially the women at the bottom. But now the Church is given a tree structure with the clergy and laity pictured as different parts of a tree with different functions, but only one goal, -bringing the kingdom of God on earth.”<sup>129</sup> It is relevant to note here that Mar Ivanios realized the significant role of the laity in the building up of the Church even before the Second Vatican Council. He always encouraged their participation<sup>130</sup> in the Church even half a century before the Council.

Mar Ivanios inherited his vision on the role of the laity in the Church from the Church tradition he was born and brought up. Unlike the Western Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Churches developed an administrative system with the participation of the laity.<sup>131</sup> Laity’s rights were duly recognized not only in the Church administration but also in liturgy and doctrinal matters.<sup>132</sup> “Thus in the East the laity was fully involved in the administration and life stream of the Church.”<sup>133</sup> This tradition is still prevalent among the Jacobites, orthodox and Marthomite Churches. From the very beginning of his ministry as a priest, Mar Ivanios encouraged the laity’s involvement in the ministry of the Church.<sup>134</sup> It is very evident in one of the important historical events in the Malankara Church, that is, among the five-member team of the pioneers of the re-union movement, Mar Ivanios included a layman named Mr. Kileelethu Chacko.<sup>135</sup>

Even after the communion with the Catholic Church, he continued promoting the lay organizations in the Malankara Catholic Church. “He had the vision to believe that reunion should not be limited among the bishops or the clergy, but it should run through all the nervous system of the Church, especially the

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<sup>129</sup> MATHEW, *The Role of Women in the Church*, 15

<sup>130</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral letter (1946)

<sup>131</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 108

<sup>132</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 108

<sup>133</sup> KANJIRAMUKALIL, *Ecclesial Identity*, 109

<sup>134</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 217

<sup>135</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 442-443



laity.”<sup>136</sup> According to him, the lay people are the children of the diocese (*rūpathayude makkal*), and they have to help the parish priest in the Church administration.<sup>137</sup> “To make the laity aware of their role in the process of evangelisation, Mar Ivanios started a school for catechists where training was properly done.”<sup>138</sup> After their training, these catechists were assisting the priests in organizing the missions, teaching catechism and helping the people in the parish to participate in the liturgy.<sup>139</sup> It was also their responsibility to visit families and conduct prayer services. “In short, they were animators and formators in the parishes and mission centers. This enabled the Archbishop to always have a core-group of lay people fully involved in the missionary task of the Church.”<sup>140</sup> Mar Ivanios had a vision to unite the laity under the label of an organization for the larger interest of the Church and his vision materialized in the formation of ‘Malankara Syrian Catholic Congress.’<sup>141</sup> In short, Mar Ivanios, a good pastor, recognized and promoted the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church.

## 2.5. Mar Ivanios and Evangelisation of India

Evangelisation is preaching the Good News of the kingdom of God. Evangelisation today would also mean working for the human communities beyond all religious barriers and living the new outlook that Jesus brought. This mission is nothing but a call to be concerned about and to work for Jesus’ dream of a new society characterized by freedom, equality, justice, fellowship and communion.

Evangelisation was one of the priorities of Mar Ivanios and all his pastoral activities were centred on this. He was completely dedicated to this mission. Mar Ivanios was not in favour of forced

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<sup>136</sup> MATHEW, *Role of Laity in Malankara*, 13

<sup>137</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Pastoral letter (1946)

<sup>138</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 213

<sup>139</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 213

<sup>140</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 213

<sup>141</sup> MATHEW, *Role of Laity in Malankara*, 13

conversions. He said that Bethany vijāthīya<sup>142</sup> mission was not for converting anybody by force, but it gives all the facilities for those who come with an ardent desire to become a Christian.<sup>143</sup> The charism of the congregation, which he founded, is “aimed at the evangelization of India through the spiritual renewal of the Malankara Church.”<sup>144</sup> According to him, bearing witness to Jesus Christ in the world should be the motto and the most important responsibility of all Christians.<sup>145</sup> Only after many years, the Second Vatican Council emphasized that it is the sacred duty of the laity, that they are called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ (LG 31).

Mar Ivanios realized that evangelisation of India would be successful only if we remove the Western garb and put on the Indian garb. He believed that only through inculturation, the evangelisation of India would be effective. He incorporated the good elements of Indian culture into the Christian life.<sup>146</sup> “Mar Ivanios, a friend and admirer of Rabindranath Tagore, was convinced of the richness of the Indian culture, and he wanted to incorporate the good elements of that culture into Christian life.”<sup>147</sup> Mar Ivanios and the monks adopted a mode of life led by Christian principles integrated with the venerable customs of the Indian *sanyāsa*.

Mar Ivanios was certain that the liturgy is a decisive means of evangelisation.<sup>148</sup> So, when he came to communion with the Catholic Church, he requested the Pope to use the same Antiochene liturgy because he knew that it was more in harmony with the Indian mind set up, and he believed that the people of this country could be easily attracted by it. “This is one of the main

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<sup>142</sup> *Vijāthīya* is sometimes translated as gentile. A better rendering would be non-Christian

<sup>143</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 148

<sup>144</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No.4

<sup>145</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 56

<sup>146</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, Mar Ivanios and the Re-Union Movement, 264

<sup>147</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, Mar Ivanios and the Re-Union Movement, 264

<sup>148</sup> See the recent papal document *Ecclesia in Asia* 22 and *Redemptoris Missio* 52

reasons for the rapid growth of the re-union movement in accepting thousands of non-Christians to the true fold.”<sup>149</sup> All his efforts to blend Indian culture and tradition with Christian faith have borne excellent results. All these show that he was open to accept or receive and recognize whatever he found good for the Church. In short, Mar Ivanios realized the necessity of inculturation and he adopted it in his pastoral activities almost half a century before the Second Vatican Council, which initiated the discussion on this matter. Mar Ivanios’ prophetic vision on evangelisation and inculturation is still relevant and ideal for the growth of the Indian Church.

### **3. Pastoral Engagements of Mar Ivanios the Social Reformer**

A reformer is one who re-forms or transforms existing unjust structures, systems and the dehumanising elements in the society. He always tries to establish justice, equality, and freedom in society with selfless love. Mar Ivanios, a social reformer, transformed the society with his shrewd foresight and charismatic personality and tried to establish the kingdom of God on earth by giving greater opportunities to the marginalized, destitute, lower castes, women and the poor. Education was the important instrument he used to bring them into the mainstream of the society.

#### **3.1. Mar Ivanios in the Field of Education**

Needless to say that education provides a strong foundation for the progress and development of any community. The purpose of education is to lead people from darkness to light (see Jn 1:4). Nations and societies without the facilities for education remain undeveloped, and uncivilized. Hence, the importance of education in a society is an incontrovertible fact. Education, according to Christian understanding, helps humans to grow into human hood according to the mature measure of Christ (see Eph 4: 13), and promotes humanization and thereby the Christocentric

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<sup>149</sup> KARIPPAYIL, *The Re-union Movement in India*, 95



transformation of the world into the kingdom of God. Mar Ivanios, a good educationalist, was conscious of the importance of education in the progress of the Church and of the society at large.

### 3.1.1. His Vision on Education

As a good pastor, Mar Ivanios always stood for the integral development of each person, and through this he aimed at the development and betterment of the Church and of the society. He “strongly believed that only education will raise the community from low standard of behavior and culture.”<sup>150</sup> He perceived that education was one of the best means to give Christian witness to the children and to form them for the betterment of the Church and of the society.

His various circulars, press conferences, writings, personal involvements and the establishment of schools and a college at Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, contributed to the building up of the whole Church and the Kerala state in the field of education.<sup>151</sup>

He knew that a community without education would remain undeveloped and progress was almost impossible. So he had always stood for the integral development of human beings and had given due importance to the education of the people in his apostolic life. Within his twenty-two years of administration as an Archbishop, he established 78 primary schools, 18 middle schools, 15 high schools, 2 teacher training schools and a college for the people, especially in far remote villages and underdeveloped areas.<sup>152</sup> The majority of the people in all these schools belonged to different Christian and non-Christian denominations. He gave equal importance to both vernacular and English instruction. The ultimate aim of English education was “to get his people appointed in the government jobs”<sup>153</sup> because during his time the knowledge of English language was essential for entry into government

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<sup>150</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 250

<sup>151</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 250

<sup>152</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 207

<sup>153</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 252

services. With this intention he established five English high schools and six middle schools.<sup>154</sup>

In order to bring the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized into the mainstream of the society, he established separate schools for girls and lower castes. His ultimate aim of education was to initiate significant transformation in the society by giving abundant opportunities to all people irrespective of caste, creed and gender. Mar Ivanios made use of education as a powerful instrument. Through education, “untouchability” began to vanish and almost all lower castes got equality of opportunity and freedom. “His services and leadership in this field cannot be limited either to his own Archdiocese to the Malankara hierarchy alone but extended to the entire field of education in Kerala.”<sup>155</sup>

### 3.1.2. Education of Women

“The education of women is all the more important for the simple reason that besides constituting fifty percent of the population of the community, they shoulder the major responsibility of socialization of their children.”<sup>156</sup> Therefore the literacy of women has great impact on the progress of the family and the nation. In India, it is one of the principal precepts taught in the Hindu books and generally accepted that,

Woman should be kept in a state of subjugation and dependence during her lifetime and under no circumstances should be allowed to become independent. Woman is bound to obey her parents while unmarried, and subject to her husband and mother-in-law when married. If she becomes a widow, she still has no liberty, but her own sons are her masters.<sup>157</sup>

They were always confined to the four walls of their houses and had no opportunities for education. Mar Ivanios was fully aware that the women in his community were at the lower strata in

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<sup>154</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 248

<sup>155</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 255

<sup>156</sup> SIDDIQI, *Educational Backwardness of Muslim Women*, 246

<sup>157</sup> LENHART, *India and Its Mission*, 271

the field of education. He was convinced that the prosperity of a community or a society to a great extent depended on the character formation and education of women. So he sent some girls to Barisole for higher education under the supervision of the Oxford Missionary Epiphany Sisters,<sup>158</sup> and they became the first members of the Bethany *Madhom* he founded. These educated and totally dedicated nuns worked for the liberation of the women through education.

Wherever Mar Ivanios started missions, schools for girls were also specially opened. This indicates his special concern for the education of women. He opened wide the gates of education for women not only for his own community but also for women of all creeds.<sup>159</sup> Education helped them to become cognizant of their own dignity, role and vocation as women in families and in societies.

### 3.2. Emancipation of Women in the Church and in Society

The classic dictum of Manu says that a woman lives under the protection of the father during childhood, of the husband during youth (middle age) and of the son during old age.<sup>160</sup> This shows that “the Hindu society did not conceive of freedom for women.”<sup>161</sup> The Syrian Christians had adopted some of the Hindu customs and traditions in their lives. Like the Hindu families, the Syrian Christians also followed a patriarchal system in their families. Women were generally looked down upon and treated as inferior beings and were made submissive to their husbands. A woman’s proper place was considered to be inside the house. Mar Ivanios, with his profound foresight and pastoral vision, wanted to change this prevailing system. He realized that in Christ there is no difference between Jew or Greek and freeman and slave, man and woman (see Gal 3:28).

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<sup>158</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 63-65

<sup>159</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 120

<sup>160</sup> VARGHESE, *The history of the Christian Churches in India*, 160

<sup>161</sup> VARGHESE, *The history of the Christian Churches in India*, 160



Mar Ivanios actualised his vision for the emancipation of women first in the Church itself. Among the Syrian Christians men always occupied the front place in the nave. Women would stand behind and were not allowed to be in the front during liturgical celebrations because they were considered as 'weaker sections.'<sup>162</sup> They would stand or sit on the floor.<sup>163</sup> But Mar Ivanios, one who always stood for equality and justice, allocated to them the right half of the Church instead of relegating them to the back of the church behind men.<sup>164</sup> This decisive decision helped the women to participate actively in the liturgical celebrations, and they themselves felt their status upgraded in the Church.

Mar Ivanios recognised the vital role of women in the family, in the Church and in the society.<sup>165</sup> He understood that their intellectual formation was necessary to liberate them from oppression and discrimination, and education was the means to attain the same. It was with this avowed intention and wholehearted conviction that he gave great emphasis to women's education. In the beginning, educated and totally dedicated nuns worked for the liberation of women, and the foundation of the Bethany Convent in the Orthodox Church was the first step taken for the emancipation of its women.<sup>166</sup> As a result of the introduction of women's education, the desire of women for a career and economic independence too rapidly increased. He started special schools for girls, which helped them to enjoy equal status in every field. By giving them opportunities in the Church and in the society, he elevated the dignity of women from their relegated position. He tried to restore equality among sexes by which power was given to the powerless, and the social barriers were broken down.

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<sup>162</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 187

<sup>163</sup> PLACID, *The Social and Socio-ecclesiastical customs of the Syrian Christians of India*, 233

<sup>164</sup> KOZHIMANNIL, *Mar Ivanios and the Re-Union Movement*, 264

<sup>165</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 65

<sup>166</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 158

### 3.3. Vijāthīya Mission

Mar Ivanios was also sure that his pastoral concern should not be confined to the community of believers alone. He was convinced that God wants the Good News of His saving love to be accepted and the Gospel be lived by all humankind.<sup>167</sup> He lamented the failure of the Indian Christian community in fulfilling its duty and responsibility of evangelisation.<sup>168</sup> One of his primary aims was to proclaim the Gospel among the people of other religions and to form them as true believers.<sup>169</sup> Bethany *vijāthīya* mission mainly focused on the evangelisation of the people of other religions and the “doors of love opened for them by Bethany Churches”<sup>170</sup>

Mar Ivanios decided to spread his mission to the southern parts of India.<sup>171</sup> He started a number of mission centres to work for the communion and the evangelisation of the people of other religions. Thus, inspired by Mar Ivanios, Fr. Kuzhinjalil, a diocesan priest from the archdiocese of Changanacherry, founded a women’s religious congregation called “Daughters of Mary.”<sup>172</sup> Spreading the light of Christ among the poor illiterate people through constant contact and visiting their homes often was the main apostolate of the Daughters of Mary. Religious instruction, ecumenism, mass media, social service, education, service of the sick, house for children and the aged, are the various other apostolates of this congregation.<sup>173</sup>

Mar Ivanios was aware of the various unjust social practices prevalent among the people of other religions, like the caste system and its consequences such as untouchability, segregation,

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<sup>167</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 292

<sup>168</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 56

<sup>169</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 57

<sup>170</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios: The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, 76

<sup>171</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 281.

<sup>172</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 202-203

<sup>173</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 205

discrimination, suppression and oppression. Among the people of other religion, some people were considered outcastes and they were not allowed to enter temples; and they were considered as untouchables. He was against all these unjust practices of caste and division that existed in the society.<sup>174</sup> He was convinced that all human beings are created in the true image and likeness of God, and are children of God; so these unjust practices are against the will of God. He prayed, "O, Lord God of creation, many people who are created in your image and likeness are perishing in ignorance and darkness. God, grant them the grace to know you and worship you."<sup>175</sup> He strongly believed that if they accepted Christ and embraced Christianity, their position would be better, and for them it would be an anticipated experience of heaven.<sup>176</sup>

Even if people asked for conversion to Christianity, no one was ready to receive them into their Church.<sup>177</sup> The converted scheduled caste had bitter experience in the Christian community. But Mar Ivanios, as a social reformer, wanted to reform the existing evil structures and practices. He regularly visited the slum areas and tried to be with them, and they considered him as a god.<sup>178</sup> He loved them, walked with them, spoke with them and assured them that he would not allow them to be separated from others.<sup>179</sup> He brought them into 'the community' and treated them with the dignity of children of God. Mar Ivanios as a missionary worked for their liberation and their integral development<sup>180</sup> till the end of his life.

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<sup>174</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 147

<sup>175</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 149

<sup>176</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 147

<sup>177</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 187

<sup>178</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 186

<sup>179</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 187

<sup>180</sup> MAR IVANIOS, Speech at the First Reunion Anniversary, 5



### 3.4. Ray of Hope for the Poor and the Lower Castes

Historically and traditionally, Kerala has been a land where castes and communities have played a significant role. Kerala is one of the caste-ridden states of India. "It was this caste-ridden society that made Vivekananda call Kerala a lunatic asylum, where people divide people and keep them behind barriers on the irrational and immersed basis of caste."<sup>181</sup> The attitude of the upper class towards the lower class was one of contempt and condescension. Untouchability and unapproachability were systematically worked out to keep the lower class always as under dogs.<sup>182</sup>

"Like the high caste Hindus of the country, the Thomas Christians would not touch or go near those of lower castes. In case they happened to do this they would purify themselves by a bath."<sup>183</sup> During the lifetime of Mar Ivanios it was a prevalent custom, and the lower caste people were not admitted to the schools, and thereby they never experienced the freedom as that of the higher class. Mar Ivanios was totally against these discriminations because he was convinced that before God the Father, everybody is equal and there is no inferior or superior. Therefore, he personally visited their huts and considered them as his own brethren.<sup>184</sup>

Mar Ivanios made use of education as a powerful tool to break up this nasty discrimination in the society. He started primary schools for such people, especially in far remote villages and underdeveloped areas. In these schools, students from all social classes were given admission. A vast majority of them were poor and belonged to the lower strata of society.<sup>185</sup> The Bethany

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<sup>181</sup> ALEXANDER, *Church, Society and State in Kerala*, 18

<sup>182</sup> ALEXANDER, *Church, Society and State in Kerala*, 18

<sup>183</sup> PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 83

<sup>184</sup> KILICHIMALA, *Mar Ivanios Oru Padanam*, 17

<sup>185</sup> NARIMATTATHIL, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios: Pastor and Prophet*, 252

Sisters started a primary school only for the lower castes.<sup>186</sup> The Sisters were not only instructing them in spiritual and academic matters but also took special care in training the children of the low castes in weaving, tailoring and cooking. In order to motivate them to pursue schooling, not only free educational materials were provided but even lunch.<sup>187</sup> Through education and with his personal relationship with these people, Mar Ivanios tried to draw them into the mainstream of society. Thus, they became part of the human community and started to experience human freedom to a reasonable level.

### 3.5. Establishment of Orphanages

Mar Ivanios' love of God was proved authentic by his love for his brethren, especially for the poor and the destitute. He considered every one as a child of God and wished their integral development. He loved the children and received the abandoned and neglected as his own.<sup>188</sup> He gave great importance to orphanages, and the first establishment he started in Bethany Ashram was an orphanage.<sup>189</sup>

He welcomed the destitute children into the orphanage and loved them and provided education in order to bring them into the mainstream of society. Without discrimination of caste and creed, he received the orphans, poor and abandoned children to the Bethany Ashram.<sup>190</sup> He entrusted the duty of teaching them to the monks of Bethany Ashram, who also cared for their character formation.<sup>191</sup> Scripture, life history of saints and prayers were taught by the monks.<sup>192</sup> He was interested not only in their spiritual well being but also in their intellectual enrichment and

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<sup>186</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 158-159

<sup>187</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 145

<sup>188</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 116

<sup>189</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 114

<sup>190</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 115

<sup>191</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 119

<sup>192</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 122

personal development. Hence, they were sent to the nearby school for their higher education.<sup>193</sup> By giving them catechetical and intellectual formation according to their talents and skills, he aimed at bringing them into the mainstream as healthy and full-fledged members of the society.

## Conclusion

Mar Ivanios, a true follower of Jesus, imitated the life of his master and lived as Jesus did. As his master 'went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil...' (Acts 10:38) Mar Ivanios also went about doing good for the children of God irrespective of caste, creed and gender. He loved the Word of God and he believed in it. This transformed his life, and he became "a Gospel" in the world. His pastoral vision and the vision of communion were the impetus for all his pastoral missions. These missions based on this vision had a great impact in society in general and the Malankara Church in particular.

Theologically his vision of communion is founded on the communion in the Trinity. Man created in the image and likeness of God shares in this Trinitarian community. Thus there arises a communion among all the children of God, the human kind. In fact, a deeper analysis of his thought leads us to understand his idea of cosmic communion of all created beings among themselves and together they commune with the Creator.

In order to fulfil his vision of communion on the ecclesial level, he tried to re-establish peace and tranquillity in the Church through his spiritual leadership, and experienced its climax in communion (re-union) with the Catholic Church. His ardent desire for re-uniting the Malankara Syrian Church with the Catholic Church was an expression to do the will of God. The re-union of

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<sup>193</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 122



the Malankara Church with the Catholic Church was an incident of unique importance in the history of Churches. Mar Ivanios, a prophet of ecclesial communion, offered his life to work for the unity of the Churches and the evangelisation of India. His vision and praxis of inculturation was a novel idea in the Church of his days. His vision of evangelisation stems from his vision of communion. He was truly a pastor and a prophet of his time. He could foresee and execute what the Western Church grasped after fifty years through the Second Vatican Council.

Mar Ivanios' vision of communion was not confined to the ecclesial level alone, but it also included the society irrespective of caste, creed, gender, etc. The ultimate aim of his pastoral vision was to re-establish peace and tranquillity in the Church, as it existed prior to the sixteenth century in Kerala, and to establish equality and justice in the society. He founded indigenous religious congregations, educational institutions, orphanages, hospitals, mission centres to fulfil his visions. Through all these means Mar Ivanios united the divided, elevated the downtrodden, and included the excluded, the marginalized, the lonely and the little ones and the suppressed into the human communion, and thus manifested God's other-centeredness in his pastoral activities, as Jesus did in his life. Bethany Ashram and Bethany Convent were the two seeds he planted in the Indian soil, particularly in Kerala to give shade, shelter and fruit to the children of God in this country.

Mar Ivanios used education as a powerful means to permeate his vision of communion in the social level. Through education, he intended to form the individuals as good citizens in the society and bring them into communion. As a social reformer, he denounced every form of injustice and oppression, discrimination and divisiveness, and tried to build up solidarity and communion.

Mar Ivanios was convinced that his vocation was 'to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the message' (Mk 3:14) of

Jesus Christ to the world. Jesus Christ preached and established the kingdom of God in this world. Mar Ivanios, a true disciple of Jesus, preached the kingdom of God and tried his best to establish the sovereignty of God by establishing peace, justice, equality and harmony in the world. In short, the reign of God was central to his pastoral ministry. Since he strongly believed that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, he saw Christ in the poor, destitute, marginalized and in the oppressed. He treated them as human beings, sympathized with them in case of trouble and tried to get their grievances redressed. He respected all human beings and treated them with human dignity.

Mar Ivanios' pastoral activities emanated from his spirituality. His contributions to the Church and the society were revolutionary and memorable. His life and his vision will continue to inspire all of us to do great things for God and his people. He believed that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, and all the people of God are parts of this body with their significant role. Any one who has deeply studied the life and works of Mar Ivanios can say without any exaggeration that he was a man of prayer and action. His pastoral vision, the vision of communion, is not superfluous but substantial.



# Mar Ivanios

## A Proactive Mystic

Joseph Menakaliekkal OIC

### 0. Introduction

Monks are the heritage of the world, especially in our country, India, the land of spirituality. They are those who had discovered and awakened the soul of India. Their dedicated search for God, in complete renunciation and purity of life led them to the discovery of the real truth of life, namely, the realization of God. *Ṛiṣis* of India were mystics, those who had *darṣan* of God. They not only transmit truth to the world, but also transform the world through their life and visions.

A religious is one who searches the true meaning of his life in God. A religious becomes a mystic, when he encounters God and finds meaning in Him. A proactive mystic is one who transmits his God experience to the world and transforms it through his ideal actions and exemplary life.

Mar Ivanios was indeed a man of God experience. His God experience extended the horizons of his vision to such an extent that he could think, not only of himself and his community, but also of the entire world. He was truly inspired by God. He was a sincere seeker of God and a champion of spiritual integration. He was a prophet and he could protest against the unjust society and liberate humanity from the bondage of injustice. His religious life helped him to realize his goal in full measure. The religious life



envisaged by Mar Ivanios is a life of convictions, commitments and God experience. To him, religious life is the best state of life that one can be in, to serve God and human beings harmoniously and to witness the love of God. According to Mar Ivanios, being immersed in love, the Religious commits himself to the betterment of himself and his community alike. So he says, 'realization of God' is the culmination of religious life.

In this article we try to analyse the vision and life of Mar Ivanios. On an analysis of his vision and life, we can see him as a proactive mystic, one who is deeply immersed in the spirit of the Lord, and at the same time creatively active in this world. When we go through the life of Mar Ivanios, we realize that the essence of his life's vision is based on his spirituality, life of faith which evolved from his religious vision, and which transformed him to a proactive mystic. Therefore, it is fitting and proper that we should have a general understanding of his religious life as well as Mar Ivanios' vision on religious life if we are, to appreciate fully the person of Mar Ivanios who has rightly been called a proactive mystic of the twentieth century.

Our study has three parts. The first part deals with the evolution, development, meaning and value of Christian as well as Hindu *Sanyāsa*. It also analyses the nature of the religious life in the light of the Second Vatican Council. The second part expatiates exclusively of Mar Ivanios' religious vision based on his two books, namely, *Girideepam* and *Malankara Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sashay*. In them we see the religious life as the best means for the realization of God. It also gives us some insights into his spirituality, as reflected in his religious life. The last section presents Mar Ivanios as a proactive mystic. Besides, some observations on the general characteristics of a mystic and a proactive mystic, this chapter gives us some aspects of the interiority, spiritual illumination and transformation of Mar Ivanios, which had made him a proactive mystic.

## 1. Religious Life -A Search for Perfect Meaning

All human beings are in search of the meaning of human existence and of the mysteries of the universe. In this search, they find their life as a journey towards God. Man, while journeying towards God, finds monastic life as the best means for the realization of God. For Christians as well as for Hindus, monastic life is an ascetic life of total renunciation oriented towards their union with God. Christian monastic life is a life style that is oriented towards the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ. For Christians and Hindus, a monk is a symbol of divine experience. In this chapter, we review the origin, development, meaning and characteristics of religious life. The aim of this study is to acquire a better understanding of the religious life of Mar Ivanios, who was truly religious and saintly.

### 1.1. Origin and Development of Monastic Life in the Christian East

Monastic life in the Church has a long history and its roots can be traced back to the first century itself. The early Christian communities earnestly desired to imitate Christ, to be perfect like Him and to be united with Him. They were never worried about the struggles involved, but considered tribulation and martyrdom as the height of Christian glory.<sup>1</sup> Martyrs were considered as the true followers of Christ. When persecution was over, people were looking for an alternative for martyrdom. Ascetics came out with new life styles. Syrian ascetics were famous for their strict and rigorous ascetical tradition. These ascetical movements gave birth to monasticism. Monastic life grew up spontaneously and simultaneously with the growth of almost all Christian centres. However, because of the great influence of Egyptian monasticism Egypt was considered as the “cradle” of Christian monasticism. Eastern monasticism had its own evolution through its own Fathers of the Church and day-by-day monasticism spread all over the world, and stood as the abode of real religious practices. People found monastic life as a radical life of Christianity and

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<sup>1</sup> RAJAN, *Bede Griffiths and Sannyasa*, 164



embraced it as a protest against secularisation of the Church, “which had ceased to be a community of saints and was now a school for righteousness with many reluctant people.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Antony, who had abandoned everything and went out to the desert in search of true Christian living, is known as the father of monasticism. He was prominent among the monks and was attracted by many because of his saintly life and wise counsels. When the number of hermits increased, St. Pachomius gave an organized form to the monastic life by giving a code of conduct to it. His monastic rule and life gave high reputation to his monasteries. St. Basil modified the rules for his monks and bound them with vows. In his time cenobitic monasticism in the east reached the zenith of its reputation. The cenobitic form gave importance to community life as well as to charitable works. For Basil, monastic life was a communal one. He set apart time for prayer and work. He had incorporated prayer and ascetical practices with missionary activities and charitable works. “The work was agricultural and craft. He set up an orphanage attached to the monastery, together with a hospital and workshop for the unemployed poor.”<sup>3</sup> Along with St. Basil, other Cappadocian fathers and several others like Evagrius, Pseudo-Dionysius and Maccarius, etc. contributed greatly to the growth of the monastic movement in the East. Saint Ephrem was also one of the prominent Eastern monks, who had given flavour and richness to the eastern monasticism through his unrivalled thoughts and unique treatises.

## 1. 2. Monasticism in the West

Monasticism in its strict sense was introduced to the western Church through St. Athanasius, and it was a ‘community movement’ from its very beginning. Though many ascetics like St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, Eusebius etc. had led ascetical life of their own kind. John Cassian, St. Augustine and St. Gregory were some who contributed greatly to the growth of the monasticism.

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<sup>2</sup> CLARK, *St. Basil the Great*, 14

<sup>3</sup> KNOWLES, *Christian Monasticism*, 22



St. Benedict transformed monasticism into a life that ordinary men could practise. He shifted the whole emphasis of asceticism to the interior- from flesh to the will. He is considered as the father of western monasticism. Several monastic communities appeared and reformed the monastic movement in the following centuries. However, the real monastic renewal in the west started with the foundation of Cluny. The newly founded Cistercian order and the Mendicant orders together with Jesuits paved the way for the growth of monasticism in the west. The church always cherished the monks and monasticism continued to flourish and it remained as a source of power for the Church and for the world.

### **1. 3. The Salient Features of Syrian Monasticism**

The basic tenets of monastic life are love of God and love of one's neighbour. However, community life is considered an essential aspect of the religious life. In the monastic community, its members are mutually responsible and are totally dedicated to Christ. They took the early Christian community as their model community. The Eucharist became their centre of worship and life. The ascetic spirit was manifested in their practice of vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. All other features of the Syrian monasticism may be reduced into five principal subjects, namely, mortification, labour, prayer, solitude, and mystical experience.

#### **1.3.1. Religious Vows**

When one becomes a religious, he consecrates himself more devotedly to God. Through the vow of obedience, one renounces one's own will to God and makes, himself free from the obstacles that prevent him from perfection. It helps him to search for God with all his capacity. "Vow of obedience is the determination to hear the voice of Christ more clearly and more articulately in one's everyday life."<sup>4</sup> When one dedicates oneself to the will of God, he receives the grace of God through which he could devote himself to the service of God by sanctifying himself and others. "The vow of obedience of the religious is the symbol and

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<sup>4</sup> DOWNEY, *Religious Life*, 9

continuation of the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ who dedicated himself perfectly to the heavenly father.”<sup>5</sup> By the vow of chastity, the religious consecrates himself to God, his senses and renounces all carnal pleasures. The vow of chastity enables religious to reflect God’s universal love. It frees the heart of the religious in an unequalled manner and fills it with overflowing love for God and mankind.<sup>6</sup> By the vow of poverty, the religious consecrates himself to God, and renounces worldly pleasures. God alone becomes his wealth. He becomes dead to the civic life. As Christ enriched us through his poverty (2 Cor 8:9), the religious are called upon to enrich others without seeking their own benefit. Freely chosen poverty is an expression of love. It is an expression to identify oneself with Jesus, who identified himself with the poor and the destitute. “The joy, and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”(GS 1) It puts trust only on the providence of God.

### 1. 3. 2. Mortification

The Scriptures were the real source of inspiration for the monks. Many of them were literally following the scriptural passages like this: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”(Mk 8:34) The monks were never satisfied with obligatory observances, but they opted for a more austere life. They considered monastic life as the struggle against the evil inclinations in order to subordinate them to the will of God. It included self-reform and self-control. Mortification is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. “It is only to live a higher life, one renounces self to possess God. One struggles to obtain peace, die to oneself to live the life of Christ, the Lord. So the end of mortification is union with God.”<sup>7</sup> The asceticism was meant for liberation or disengagement from the bonds of the flesh and the world. It was to allow the spirit to

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<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No. 82

<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No. 96

<sup>7</sup> TANQUEREY, *The Spiritual Life*, 364



awaken to be fully receptive to the divine word and to be completely ready to follow Christ. The basic place was given to work in asceticism. "The monastic life is a life which, by means of discipline and renunciation, delivers man from heedlessness and irresponsibility, the spiritual insensibility and lack of freedom which come from immersion in cares, pleasures and self seeking."<sup>8</sup> "The discipline of the monastic life is all directed to one end: the development of this 'purity of heart' which is a condition of peace, self forgetfulness, humility, unconcern with the images and pre-occupations of a life dominated by servile care."<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3.3. Labour

In monastic tradition, prayer and labour constitute the two-fold service to God. Prayer and work are the two wings by which the monk rises to the highest perfection. In manual labour one becomes a helper and co-operator with God, the creator and administrator of our world; one becomes an instrument of his divine providence; one helps Him to change and renew the face of the earth.<sup>10</sup> "To work, to transform this world, is to become a man and to build a human community; is also to save. Likewise to struggle against misery and exploitation and to build a just society is already to be part of the saving action, which is moving towards its complete fulfilment."<sup>11</sup> According to St. Bernard, "labors, seclusion, voluntary poverty, are the monk's titles of honor, the patent of nobility in the monastic state."<sup>12</sup> The monks paid attention to the basic needs of the population such as health care, food, agricultural development, etc. in earlier days. They considered manual labour an extension of monastic prayer. St. Basil asked the monks to integrate prayer with work. In his view, one should praise God with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with our lips or with our hearts while one is at work.

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<sup>8</sup> MERTON, *The Monastic Journey*, 7

<sup>9</sup> MERTON, *The Monastic Journey*, 7

<sup>10</sup> MERTON, *The Monastic Journey*, 28

<sup>11</sup> GUTIERREZZ, *A Theology of Liberation*, 91

<sup>12</sup> GIRANT, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, 388



### 1.3.4. Prayer

Prayer is an essential element in monastic life. A Religious is a man of prayer. His life of prayer is centred on the liturgy of the Church, the chanting of psalms, and the Eucharistic sacrifice. The Eucharist is considered the centre of life of the religious. "Liturgy is the royal road of the monk to God."<sup>13</sup> Prayer presupposes some knowledge of God and of self, since it establishes a relation between the two. It conforms one's will to that of God. According to St. John Damascene, "it is an elevation of the soul to God."<sup>14</sup> Prayer includes both prayer of worship and petition. In silence, the religious meditates and ruminates on the word of God. The love of God in its contemplative expression transforms people and integrates them with God. It helps one to experience God in oneself.

### 1.3.5. Solitude

In solitude one seeks the will of God and tries to be immersed in him. It gives him the vitality to serve God and his people. God speaks his eternal word in silence and He wishes us to receive His words in silence. In the din and noise of human activity, we cannot hear the word of God who speaks to us silently.<sup>15</sup> Silence should lead one to encounter God. "The flight from men will never be total, even if one wants it to be. Solitude must therefore be completed or intensified by silence."<sup>16</sup> Monks who lived in solitude cherished the presence of a spiritual father, who gave them guidance to discern the will of God.

### 1.3.6. Mystical Experience

The monastic life was represented by a spiritual combat with oneself in a struggle to overcome the body and its passion and appetites in a life of asceticism. This was not asceticism for its

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<sup>13</sup> MERTON, *The Monastic Journey*, 8

<sup>14</sup> TANQUEREY, *The Spiritual Life*, 243

<sup>15</sup> MERTON, *The Monastic Journey* 29

<sup>16</sup> SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 215

own sake but rather for its reward, living in the presence of God and gaining knowledge of God, which was a life of Angels, a foretaste of the heavenly life.<sup>17</sup> The Greek father Evagrius of Pontus distinguished between three stages in the spiritual journey to God: the first one is the active life which is free from passion and characterized by purity of heart; the second is natural contemplation which sees God in all things and all things in God; the third, called 'theoria', is the contemplation of God face to face, in an unmediated union of love.<sup>18</sup>

The Christian East has developed the so called "Jesus' prayer" mostly in the form "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." The repetition of Jesus' prayer consecrated the mind with the presence of God leading to an ecstatic vision of the divine light.<sup>19</sup> From the history of the Church, we can understand that most of the Eastern ascetics were Mystics and they were outstanding not only by their mortifications but also by their revelations and visions. "It may be supposed, that from the very first beginning, asceticism in Syriac Christianity was deeply connected with mysticism."<sup>20</sup>

#### **1.4. The Nature of Religious Life in the Light of Vatican II**

The Second Vatican Council was a turning point in the history of the Church. It revolutionized and revitalized the Church by reviving its true original spirit and equipping it with the needs of the time. It had a clear vision about religious life. In its view, religious life is a total dedication of oneself to God in a supreme act of love. (PC 1)

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<sup>17</sup> FANNING, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*, 28

<sup>18</sup> KING, *Christian Mystics*, 196

<sup>19</sup> KING, *Christian Mystics*, 195

<sup>20</sup> GUNTER BLUM, *Mysticism in the Syriac Heritage*, 5

### 1.4.1. Religious Life is a Divine Call and Gift

Religious life is a special gift of grace in the life of the Church and oriented towards the perfection of divine love by means of the evangelical counsels. “You did not choose me but I choose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruits.” (Jn 15:16) It is a call to holiness and a call to lead the people of God to holiness. (LG 39) It is a call to build up the ecclesial community. (LG 43) “In the Church religious life is considered as a gift bestowed by God.” (LG 43) It is a call of God, which demands a transformation from one’s previous life. Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. (Jn 3:3) It is deeply rooted in baptism and aims towards the mission of the Church. (PC 5) One receives this gift from the Lord and is able to observe it through the grace of the Holy Spirit. (LG 43)

### 1.4.2. Religious Life is a Witness

A Religious, according to the highest demands of the kingdom of God, witnesses to the reality that the people of God have no permanent city here below. (LG 44) “By seeking and following Christ in charity, poverty and obedience, religious give the world a concrete witness to the primacy of a Christ-oriented life.”<sup>21</sup> “The Church is not motivated by an earthly ambition but is interested in one thing – only to carry on the works of Christ under the guidance of the Holy spirit, for He came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served.”(GS 3)

### 1.4.3. Religious Life is Trinity Centred

Religious consecration establishes a new relation between the person and the Triune God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. “A Christian Sannyasin experiences the fullness of his existence in the truth and bliss of the Trinity. He is not merely satisfied with the knowledge of the Trinity. But wants to be absorbed in the

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<sup>21</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *John Paul II Speaks to Religious* - I, 50



triune God.”<sup>22</sup> It is Theo-centred. Religious life is a response to the invitation of Jesus to “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48) “It is necessary that the members of every community seek God solely and before everything else.” (PC 5) The Council highlights the Christo-centric aspect of religious life by stating that religious life is all the more a faithful imitation of the kind of life embraced by Christ. (LG 44) The final norm of religious life is the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ. (PC 1) Religious life is Pneumato-centred. The Holy Spirit is the inspirer and motivating agent of religious life. He transforms one in to the likeness of Christ “Under the impulse of love, which the Holy Spirit pours in to their hearts (Rom 5:5), they live more and more for Christ and for his body, the Church (Col 1: 24).” (PC 1)

#### 1.4.4. Ecclesial Aspect of Religious Life

Religious life is so closely associated with the Church that without it the Church cannot exist in all its perfection as Christ willed it. “For the holiness of the Church, the holiness of the religious is indispensable; without consecrated life the Church would not be fully herself.”<sup>23</sup> Religious life has always been looked upon as a movement whose purpose is to help those who enter it to attain Christian perfection. It always demands a spiritual renewal of its members as well as the whole Church. A religious by his very profession is consecrated to the Church’s welfare, i.e., to save humankind. Religious life that is established in the Church expects the progress and holiness of its members as well as the good of the entire body of Christ (LG 43). “All institutes should share in the life of the Church. They should make their own and should foster to the best of their ability, in a manner consonant with their own natures, its initiatives and undertaking in the biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social matters.” (PC 2c)

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<sup>22</sup> VATTAKUZH, *Indian Christian Sannyasa and Swami Abishiktananda*, 124

<sup>23</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *John Paul II Speaks to Religious - I*, 50

### 1.4.5. Anthropological Nature of Religious Life

Anthropology is concerned with the whole human being in its essence and in all the activities, which have their root in that essence.<sup>24</sup> Anthropological understanding of religious life speaks about the integral development of the person and his salvation, who is a member of a religious house as well as a member of human society. (LG 46) “It is man himself who must be saved: it is mankind that must be renewed. It is man, therefore, who is the key to this discussion, man considered whole and entire, with body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.” (GS 3) It also demands broader aspirations of humankind. “Man as an individual and as a member of society craves a life that is full, autonomous, and worthy of his nature as a human being.” (GS 9) The Second Vatican Council exhorts that “institutes should see to it that their members have a proper understanding of men, of the conditions of the times and of the needs of the Church, this to the end that, making wise judgments about the contemporary world in the light of faith, and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to help men more effectively.” (PC 2d)

### 1.4.6. Eschatological Aspect of Religious Life

Religious life is a testimony to the evangelical counsels of faith, hope and charity in a radiation of grace, joy and holiness.<sup>25</sup> Religious life has a direct relationship with Christ’s second coming. Religious life can’t be understood apart from Jesus’ second coming.<sup>26</sup>

For the People of God has no lasting city but seeks the city which is to come, and the religious state of life, in bestowing greater freedom from the cares of earthly existence on those who follow it, simultaneously reveals more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age, witnessing to the new and eternal life which we have acquired through the redemptive

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<sup>24</sup> ROSMINI, *Anthropology as an Aid to Moral Science*, viii

<sup>25</sup> CHARIVUPURAYIDATHIL, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 45

<sup>26</sup> VOILLAUDEM, *Religious Life in Today’s World*, 13

work of Christ and prelude our future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom. (LG 44)

Religious along with the Church look forward for their eternal glory in God. Though religious are living in this world but not of the world, they live in this world impelled by charity, willingly suffer the trials of human life and go on living through love for mankind. "The full significance of God's action in history is understood only when it is put in its eschatological perspective; similarly the revelation of the final meaning of history gives value to the present. The self communication of God points towards the future, and at the same time this promise and good news reveal humanity to itself and widen the perspective of its historical commitment here and now."<sup>27</sup>

#### 1.4.7. The Value and the Meaning of Religious Life

Religious consecration has its basis in baptismal consecration. (PC 5) Though all Christians need to be imitators of Jesus Christ, a religious is particularly called to be the true imitator of Jesus Christ. Imitation of Jesus Christ is a fellowship with God. It is a life in Christ. It is also a discipleship. A monk should lead others also to perfection. It is a call to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is an imitation to be like Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life. "We come to the monastery to live more fully, more perfectly and more completely in Christ"<sup>28</sup> The theology of religious life is based on the values of loving, caring bearing and sharing. Religious life is based on the evangelical counsels such as faith, charity and hope. "Religious life is not only rooted in, but also flourished and is nurtured by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity."<sup>29</sup> Renunciation of self is a firm determination to follow or imitate Jesus Christ. Perfection implies above all a more rigorous imitation of the love of Jesus for the heavenly Father and for one's own neighbour.

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<sup>27</sup> GUTIERREZZ, *A Theology of Liberation*, 95

<sup>28</sup> MERTON, *The Monastic Journey*, 15

<sup>29</sup> CHARIVUPURAYIDATHIL, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 45



Religious life aims at the holiness of its members as well as of the whole humanity, through the perfect practice of the evangelical counsels and consecrated life. (LG 44) Religious life adorns and equips the Church members with their sanctity and good works. They spend their whole life for the building up of the kingdom of heaven on earth and act as a sign of the eschatological kingdom of God. They become models and bear witness to the heavenly kingdom and reveal to all believers the heavenly goods, which are already present in this life. (LG 44) They dignify their life through a dedicated life of prayer and service.

Religious life in Christ comes from ones participation in Jesus' death and resurrection. A religious is a man of freedom. Renunciation of worldly things makes him free. His mind is released from all its binding forces. He is free from egocentric impulses, desires and cravings. Through the full dedication of their own wills as a sacrifice to God, they are trying to identify their will with God and ensure the freedom of the children of God. "Far from lowering the dignity of the human person, religious obedience leads it to maturity by extending the freedom of the sons of God." (PC14) One experiences oneself being filled with the love of God. Thus he participates in the divine life of God and experiences a union with Him.

### 1.5. *Sanyāsa* in Hinduism

India is a land of deep spirituality, and the depth of Indian culture, mainly is the fruit of the monastic experience of India's *r̥ṣis* or of seers.<sup>30</sup> The imprints of religiosity in the Indian civilization basically originated from these monks of ancient India. In the history of India, we see that many men and women dedicated themselves to the search of the supreme, the absolute. And *Sanyāsa* has become the greatest religious force in India and has attracted many noble minds. *Sanyāsa* is known as the surest means of salvation, and the *Sanyāsins* are said to be the symbols of immortal life.

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<sup>30</sup> SHARMA, *Ethical Philosophies of India*, 10

### 1.5.1. *Sanyāsa* as an Ashram

In fact, the Hindu scriptures speak of *Sanyāsa* as *Ashrama*, the best means of God- realization, which is the basis of Hinduism. A Hindu considers one's life in this world as a journey towards God, a means for self-realization. This life can be divided into four stages on the pilgrimage to eternal life. They are: *Brahmacharya* (the period of student hood ), *Gṛahasta* (the period of house holder), *Vānaprastha* (the period of life as forest dweller) and *Sanyāsa* (the period of total renunciation). Etymologically the word '*Asrama*' derived from the root '*sram*' means to labour or to toil. Toil is related with two activities such as austerity and praise, and directed towards three primordial activities: the gaining of heaven by gods, the discovery of the sacrificial knowledge by the *Vedic Seers*, and the creation of the world.<sup>31</sup> In the ancient Indian literature the term '*āsrma*' has two meanings. The first is that of a residence, where holy people live and perform religious austerities, and the second meaning is that of a religious or a holy way of life.<sup>32</sup> The word '*samnyasā*' (*sanyāsa*) is composed of the prefix '*sam*' (totally) and the noun '*nyāsa*' (laying aside). Therefore, it means total renunciation.<sup>33</sup>

A *sanyāsi* is a total renouncer. Among the five *Samnyāsa Upanishads*, *Arūṇi Upanishad* speaks about the renunciation "in truth, a man who knows the importance of the Veda abandons these either before or after his Vedic initiation: father, son, fire, sacrificial string, rites, wife and everything else here below." (AU 9) He renounces everything for *mokṣa*, the union with God, the ultimate meaning of life. According to Manu, it is necessary that one should fulfil his obligation before he renounces. "A man should pay the three debts before he sets his mind on renunciation... if a twice born man chooses renunciation before he has studied Vedas, fathered sons and offered sacrifices, he will fall." (MDh 6.35-37) But *Jābāla Upanishad* says, "let him, moreover, renounce on the very day that he becomes detached,

<sup>31</sup> OLIVELLE, *The Asrama System*, 9

<sup>32</sup> OLIVELLE, *The Asrama System*, 16

<sup>33</sup> RAJAN, *Bede Griffiths and Sannyasa*, 10

regardless of whether he has taken the vow or not, whether he has graduated or not, and whether he has kindled the fire or is without a fire.” (JU 64) However, this is limited to those individuals who have acquired a high degree of knowledge or detachment. These sayings exhort that the motivating force for renouncing is detachment. “The presence of *vairāgya* or detachment is considered an indispensable condition for renunciation.”<sup>34</sup> *Nārada parivrājaka Upanishad* says, “Only when indifference (*vairasya*) towards all things has arisen in their minds, do they seek renunciation. Otherwise a man shall become an outcast.” (NpU-138) All these explanations show that *sanyāsa* is not an escape from the world but a responsible and dedicated search for the fulfilment of one’s life meaning, *mokṣa*, the union with God.

A *sanyāsi* is a *Parivrājaka*, a religious mendicant, who abandons everything, and a *Yogin*, one who unites himself with God by detaching himself from the world. A *sanyāsi* is also known as a *ṛṣi*, who receives and promulgates the Vedic knowledge. He is a *Muni*, an ascetical person with long hairs who follows the wind’s course and goes where the gods have gone before.<sup>35</sup> He can be called also *Māuni*, who remains silent externally and internally. A *sanyāsi* is a *Bikṣu*, a mendicant ascetic, who lives entirely on alms. They are respected and honoured by all and are given the title ‘*Swāmi*’, which means ‘lord’.

The *Baudhayana Dharma Sutras* proposes five major and five minor vows for the life of a *Sannyāsi*. The major vows are non-injury, fruitfulness, abstention from appropriating the property of others, continence and liberty. The minor vows are abstention from anger, obedience, avoidance of rashness and purity in eating.<sup>36</sup> Total renunciation, austerity, detachment, solitude and silence, universal love and equanimity, prayer and contemplation are some of the values cherished by the *Sannyāsi*. All these practices help the *Sannyāsi* to detach himself from the earthly

<sup>34</sup> OLIVELLE, *The Asrama System*, 177

<sup>35</sup> OLIVELLE, *The Asrama System*, 16

<sup>36</sup> TEKODAN, *Sannyāsa and Spiritual Formation in Hinduism*, 19



attachments and make himself closer to God by discovering his inner self.

### 1.5.2. Concept of Sanyāsa in the *Bhagavat Gita*

The Bhagavad Gita gives a new perspective to Hindu asceticism and a new idea to Hindu *Sanyāsa*. According to the Gita, *Sanyāsa* is not renunciation of action but renunciation in action. “The Gita emphasizes the *spirit of Sanyāsa*, renunciation not of action but of the fruit of action, *Nishkama Karma*. It advocates *moksa*, not through withdrawal from society, but through selfless service.”<sup>37</sup> The Gita, thus, revolutionizes the idea of *Sanyāsa* by the synthesis of renunciation and action, secular and sacred. “According to the Gita *Sanyāsa* offers, as in the Upanishads, the greatest freedom, serenity, and joy to the *Sanyāsi* (BG VI:1-3) through the attitude of detachment. This calm, joy, and spiritual freedom are result of his meditative attachment to the supreme self.”<sup>38</sup> It demands from the *Sanyāsi* a radical way of life, a life of commitment and service. Through this a *Sanyāsi* finds meaning in his life and self-realization.

The monastic life is a life of love for God and for men. Religious life has its origin from the deep desire of human beings in their search of being united with God. It is a radical life in which they detach themselves from everything that prevents them from the realization of their ultimate goal, *mokṣa*, salvation. As the Bhagavat Gita says, it is not renunciation of action but renunciation in action, salvation, not by a withdrawal from society, but through selfless service. Here we see Jesus Christ, the perfect model of religious life. Therefore a religious life is a true imitation of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Mar Ivanios’ Vision of Religious Life

Mar Ivanios, one of the eminent personalities of the twentieth century, was a great visionary. He was a man who rejuvenated and

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<sup>37</sup> ACHARYA, *Kurisumala A Symposium on Ashram Life*, 102

<sup>38</sup> VATTAKUZHAY, *Indian Christian Sannyasa and Swami Abhishiktananda*, 31

reconstructed the Malankara Church through his own life and ideals. The establishment of the indigenous Christian religious community, Bethany Ashram, which integrated prayer and action, was a new innovation by him in the Malankara Church. It gave a spiritual vitality and a new life to the community. According to Mar Ivanios, religious life is an imitation of Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of love. Through religious life, one tries to become another Christ who sacrificed his life for humanity. Let us now look into his religious vision based on his autobiographical book *Girideepam* and his book *Malankara Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*. Since the spirituality, the life of faith of Mar Ivanios has a close link with his religious life, a study of his vision of religious life will help us to understand his spirituality, which led him to be a mystic.

## 2.1. Origin and Development of Mar Ivanios' Religious Vision

Mar Ivanios was a man of search: search for meaning and new visions. In his search for truth and meaning, he found religious life as the best means for the realization of God, which he was convinced, the ultimate aim of human life. Since religious life is a totally committed life, a life of sacrifice, he realized religious life as the excellent means to serve God and human beings. His vision he derived from years of prayer, contemplation and research.<sup>39</sup> Through his life he experimented the success of religious life. He was a man of spirituality. He grew up in an orthodox family, where his primary reading was sacred scripture, and in the seminary he devoted himself to scriptural studies.<sup>40</sup> Before beginning his religious life, he visited many of the Hindu monasteries like Gandhi's Ashram Sabarmati and Tagore's international institute, Santhinikethan, with the intention of studying the life of monks there.<sup>41</sup> Though he started religious life in his Church as a means to revive and reconstruct his community, the seed of desire to become a religious was in his deepest heart

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<sup>39</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60

<sup>40</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 107-108

<sup>41</sup> GIBBONS, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 40

from his childhood.<sup>42</sup> This seed got its water and manure only when he surrendered himself before God in search of the meaning of his life. The foundation of a religious ashram not only transformed his community, but also himself. He was also deeply influenced by the Eastern Christian traditions. In the Christian East, monks were the authoritative spokesmen, and the Church adopted their liturgies, their spiritual way and their holiness because, increasingly, monasticism was seen as the ideal of Christian life.<sup>43</sup> In this context, we can also see that the evolution of Mar Ivanios' life and spirituality is from his vision on religious life.

## 2.2. Mar Ivanios' Concept of Religious Life

Mar Ivanios was a true religious, and he had the courage of his convictions and ideas. He cherished religious life as the best means for the realization of God. In his view, religious life is an ascetical life, in which one sacrifices oneself on the altar of love to serve God and his fellow human beings, as Jesus Christ offered himself. Thus a religious becomes a true imitator of Jesus Christ and a true witness to the kingdom of God in this world. In order to be a true witness in one's own culture, Mar Ivanios stressed the need of the indigenous nature of the religious houses. He, being a champion of integration, calls religious to be an integrated personality by integrating prayer and action.

### 2.2.1. The Religious Life - An Ascetic and Committed Life in the Church

Mar Ivanios calls religious vocation as an acetic charism, a life of self-discipline and ascetical life, which is based on the example and teachings of Jesus.<sup>44</sup> It is the result of a deep desire for a committed life, and its basis is the faith in God. Mar Ivanios in his very first statement about religious life in his autobiographical book says, "only a group of committed and

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<sup>42</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 5

<sup>43</sup> MCGRATH, *Christian Spirituality*, 128

<sup>44</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 13-14



disciplined people, who have a common vision can satisfy and realize the vision of renovating the Church."<sup>45</sup> This is because he believed that people couldn't live their lives realistically without convictions. In his thought, what people need are not rules of life based on some principles but rules of life based on convictions. Thus, Mar Ivanios realized that until an ever-burning God experience is acquired, in the course of time the missionaries themselves might go after the worldly pleasure and values.<sup>46</sup> According to Mar Ivanios, a religious needs to see God alone as his wealth and law of life<sup>47</sup> and the asceticism of a religious finds its fullness only when he enters into the divine realm and he becomes a witness to God in this world.<sup>48</sup> Mar Ivanios firmly affirms that only an ascetic and committed person can imitate Jesus in all its fullness and lead one to God. "The one who wants to be dear to God, he should imitate Jesus Christ in everything. The inspiring model of Jesus' self sacrifice, which is shown on Golgotha, should be reflected in one's own inner self. He must leave not only family and country but himself as well."<sup>49</sup>

In the opinion of Mar Ivanios, religious are 'true children' and 'real representatives' of the Church. "The spirit of the Lord resides and works in the Church, the body of Jesus Christ. This presence and works of the spirit of the lord satisfies the need of the Church by bringing the religious who sacrifices himself to imitate Jesus Christ. They are the true children and real representatives of the Church."<sup>50</sup> Religious consecration is deeply rooted in baptism and aims towards the mission of the Church. He points out that religious life is the heart of the Church, and the religious is an authentic Christian. His life is the fullness of Christian life that he received at the time of baptism. Mar Ivanios reminds the religious about the importance of the religious community. "Religious community is the spiritual mother of the religious and the heart of the Church. She is the most holy and lovable person. In Christ, she

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<sup>45</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 59

<sup>46</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 59

<sup>47</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 10

<sup>48</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 11

<sup>49</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 11

<sup>50</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 15

conceives the religious in her womb and get ready to beget him in heaven".<sup>51</sup>

### 2.2.1.1. Separation from the World

The ascetical life of the religious starts with his separation from the crowd, says Mar Ivanios. As a perfect follower of Christ, in the practice of evangelical virtue, the religious has to show radical courage and commitment. The perfect observance of all the commandments requires individual attention and true commitment to the Word of God.<sup>52</sup> It demands self-discipline and total surrender to the will of God. Secondly, he has to surrender himself to the will of God by renouncing himself.<sup>53</sup> Since one cannot succeed in keeping any commandment with a wandering mind, it is necessary to set apart oneself from the world. The one who dies to the world dies to oneself.<sup>54</sup> He lives according to the will of God. According to Mar Ivanios such a person alone is able to imitate Jesus Christ in its fullness.<sup>55</sup>

For Mar Ivanios, the separation of the religious from the world, and all his/her ascetical practices has only one aim: to search and love God with one's whole heart.<sup>56</sup> The religious is called out of this world to seek God truly in silence, prayer, solitude, and renunciation in simplicity. The world of the monk is to seek God first and Him alone. This is why Mar Ivanios always stressed the importance of silence in the religious houses, and he always strictly followed it in his religious houses.<sup>57</sup> According to him, a religious who practices internal and external silence always resides with God,<sup>58</sup> which is his basic thirst of life.

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<sup>51</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 42-43

<sup>52</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

<sup>53</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 138

<sup>54</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

<sup>55</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 62

<sup>56</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 10

<sup>57</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 51

<sup>58</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 53

### 2.2.1.2. The Religious Vows

Mar Ivanios rightly says that religious profession is an extension and renewal of one's baptismal commitment.<sup>59</sup> Through the religious consecration s/he participates in Christ's mission which was entrusted to Him by God.<sup>60</sup> They not only become children of the resurrection but also sharers of the glory of the risen lord.<sup>61</sup> "Religious consecration makes one able to receive the grace of God to be a true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ... It makes him the renewed lamb of God with the resurrected Jesus Christ."<sup>62</sup> According to Mar Ivanios, the three vows help the religious to be in union with Jesus Christ in the love of God<sup>63</sup> and helps one to dedicate oneself to the service of his fellow human beings, which is also a basic need of her/his vocation.<sup>64</sup> Through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience God alone becomes the treasure, joy, enabling power and law of life for the religious.<sup>65</sup> In short, vows invite one to be a true imitator of Jesus Christ, who lived a holy life by renouncing everything and obedient to the will of God till the end of His life.

### 2.2.1.3. Prayer And Worship

"Religious life itself is a worship of God. It is a continuous act of liturgy,"<sup>66</sup> says Mar Ivanios. The religious along with his community is nourished by its interior life of prayer and other liturgical practices, which is oriented towards the experience of God. According to Mar Ivanios, a religious is a man of prayer and of praise. A religious is a man set apart by God for this purpose. Therefore, he insisted that the religious should pray before any act of their life. For him, "to imitate Jesus Christ in His life of prayer is to experience a sense of constant union with God through

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<sup>59</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 107

<sup>60</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 105

<sup>61</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 108

<sup>62</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 108

<sup>63</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 111

<sup>64</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 112

<sup>65</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 10

<sup>66</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jivitha Sahāyi*, 18



meditation with special emphasis on the word of God, active participation in the liturgical life of the Church, the observance of the spiritual exercises.”<sup>67</sup> In his view, Jesus Christ, who united himself with his Father in prayer, is the example for religious for their prayer life. According to Mar Ivanios, “divine offices are the official prayer of the Church, which she offers to God in union with our lord Jesus Christ and along with heavenly angels and saints.”<sup>68</sup> He exhorts the religious to build up their lives through meditation, spiritual reading, retreat, recollection and other devotional practices. He gives due importance to liturgical prayer and Holy *Qurbano* and says that the prayer life of the religious should be fostered and centred on Holy *Qurbano*.<sup>69</sup>

#### 2.2.1.4. Self Discipline and other Ascetical Practices

Along with many Church fathers, Mar Ivanios believed that religious life implies an obligation to discipline oneself and renounce oneself in order to live in and by the spirit of Christ.<sup>70</sup> “A religious should seek before all else to live out his faith. And in accordance with the gospel, one should renounce oneself and take up the cross of self denial and follow Christ (Mt 16:24-26).”<sup>71</sup> Mar Ivanios stresses the importance of novitiate and says, “as is the novitiate so will be the rest of his religious life...”<sup>72</sup> So he exhorts the religious to have an authentic and meaningful novitiate with spiritual direction, self-discipline and contemplation and other ascetical practices.<sup>73</sup> “One should discipline oneself in accordance with the vision of religious life. He should practice the virtues like faith, love, hope, humility, self sacrifice, detachment, obedience, chastity, poverty and other similar virtues.”<sup>74</sup> In all these ascetical practices of the religious, he makes solidarity with

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<sup>67</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No. 4.i

<sup>68</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, xix

<sup>69</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, xix

<sup>70</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 13

<sup>71</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 9

<sup>72</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No. 32

<sup>73</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 31

<sup>74</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 30

the suffering Christ and it is a means to attain spiritual freedom in order to follow him radically.<sup>75</sup>

### 2.2.2. Religious Life – A Life of Prayer and Action

According to Mar Ivanios, the religious life is following Jesus Christ in his life of prayer and action. He believed that if religious life is an imitation of Jesus Christ, it would be imperfect if some one followed Him only in certain aspects of His life. However, those who really want to be a true imitator of Jesus Christ should follow Him perfectly by imitating His life of prayer and action.

#### 2. 2. 2.1. Life of Prayer and Action -A Symbol of Love

The heart and soul of religious life, according to Mar Ivanios, is love: Love of God and love of human beings. “The ultimate end of man’s life is God, whose essential nature is love. Man achieves his end only when he becomes perfect in his love towards God and his love towards his fellow human beings for the sake of God. Man is called by God in order to achieve this noble end.”<sup>76</sup> Mar Ivanios says that all religious should desire and work not for her/his own salvation but also of others. “Religious should neither be satisfied with imitation, love, and worship of God nor with his participation in Jesus’ life. However, he should earnestly desire that others too should imitate, follow, worship, serve and love God.”<sup>77</sup> In Mar Ivanios’ view, a religious is called to love each others in God and give a meaningful witness to the love of God in this world.

The world needs to see the spirit of true Christianity. The world must be brought closer to God by revealing the true love of Christ in each generation of mankind. In order to reveal his love which culminated in His self sacrifice, who else shall Jesus depends on other than religious? ... Whom has He regarded worthy, in order to reveal His own love, the love, which He has towards His

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<sup>75</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 15

<sup>76</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 9

<sup>77</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 63

father and to the whole humanity? Whom can Jesus consider to realize His love in each generation of mankind? Are they not His own religious who are filled with his spirit, grace, and power, i.e., the religious who have no one other than Jesus to rely on?<sup>78</sup>

According to Mar Ivanios the three vows, such as poverty, chastity, and obedience are the meaningful expression of Christian love. The life of poverty is the life in which one enjoys the pleasure of being treasured only with God.<sup>79</sup> Through the life of chastity, one becomes the channel of love by which his life being filled with love of God and from him it flows to others.<sup>80</sup> Through the vow of obedience, one becomes able to prepare his life to grow in love.<sup>81</sup> In short, for Mar Ivanios, religious life which integrates prayer and action is the best possible way to live out Christian love. It enables and entrusts one to love God and humans, to serve God and humanity.<sup>82</sup>

#### 2.2.2.2. Religious Life-An Invitation to Serve God and Man

The radical vision of Mar Ivanios was that one's proclamation of the good news should go along with a virtuous life and charitable acts with social concern.<sup>83</sup> Religious life is a total commitment to the love of God. He sacrifices himself for the service of God and human beings. "Those who are ready to serve God will dedicate their whole life for the realization of God."<sup>84</sup> Mar Ivanios never considered religious life as a means for personal perfection alone. But it includes the perfection of oneself and sanctification of other fellow human beings. According to him, one who serves humanity serves God.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 16

<sup>79</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 106

<sup>80</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 106

<sup>81</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 127

<sup>82</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 12

<sup>83</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60

<sup>84</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

<sup>85</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 100



Searching God in religious life only for one's own sake and not for the sake of the neighbour is one of the temptations a religious faces in his life. We may mistakenly think that we love God because we experience happiness in our prayer and meditations. However, we have received the commandment from God that one who loves God must love his neighbour as well. A religious is a co-worker in God's work of salvation of man.<sup>86</sup>

Mar Ivanios not only gives spiritual exhortations but also gives practical directions. "One should truly participate in the mission of Jesus Christ to save the world. He should evaluate himself how he utilizes the time given by God to serve and pray for the good of others. He needs to examine whether he was successful in seeing God in others, and serve and love others as Jesus Christ loved and served the humanity."<sup>87</sup>

### 2. 2. 3. Religious Life - A Holocaust

The most theologically convincing interpretation of religious life by Mar Ivanios is his comparison of religious life to a sacrifice. According to Mar Ivanios, "the essence of religious life is to submit oneself as a holocaust to God."<sup>88</sup> Thus, he interprets every act of the religious, especially the religious vows in terms of sacrifice. "A religious offers his life to God as a sacrifice. The sacrificial animal needs to be slaughtered. It should be slaughtered by the triadic vows."<sup>89</sup> To Mar Ivanios, Jesus who offered himself as a pleasing sacrifice to God is the model of the religious. "Religious consecration is the perfect oblation one can offer to God. Since through it one surrenders fully to God as an oblation, whatever one has and whatever one will have in the future."<sup>90</sup>

Religious, who is similar to the sacrificial animal is set apart by himself. With his own will he comes to the

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<sup>86</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 97

<sup>87</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 97

<sup>88</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 113

<sup>89</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 138

<sup>90</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 117

religious house, which can be compared to the premises of the temple. He washes away his sins in his tears of repentance and remains there in expectation of the day of sacrifice. On the day of sacrifice, he is to be beheaded. He beheads himself. The knife is the triadic vows. He then submits himself to the superior, and the superior receives him in the name of God. A religious must be flayed and cut in to pieces. From it dirty parts need to be removed and thrown out. The mere observation of the vows alone will not make one a perfect religious. He must be offered as an oblation on the altar of the lord. He lays himself on the altar along with Jesus Christ. Moreover, this sacrifice needs to be continued until the end of his life.<sup>91</sup>

#### 2.2.4. The Religious Life – A Perfect Imitation of Jesus Christ

In Mar Ivanios' words "the foundation of Christian religious life is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and his sacrifice on the cross. A religious lives his life by imitating and obeying Jesus Christ."<sup>92</sup> He continues, "one who wants to be close to God, must imitate Jesus Christ in everything, in his thought, words and deeds. The self-sacrifice showed on Golgotha should be reflected in his own inner life. He must leave not only his own family and country but himself as well."<sup>93</sup> For Mar Ivanios, religious life is a witness to the world: witnessing Jesus Christ in his words, deeds, and life. By the very profession of faith and consecrated life, the religious participates and dedicates himself to the mission of Christ. As Christ, the religious set apart themselves to live for God and for the service of all humanity. In the religious life, Jesus becomes the model and point of reference. "Jesus Christ is the way to perfection and he is the end of perfection to the religious. The perfection of the religious lies in loving, imitating,

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<sup>91</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 138-139

<sup>92</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 12

<sup>93</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

identifying with and living in Jesus Christ.”<sup>94</sup> Religious life is an invitation to become another Christ, one who dedicated his life fully to God and sacrificed it to humanity in love.<sup>95</sup> “Jesus is the first religious who lived on this earth who gave himself as a complete and perfect offering to his heavenly father. Jesus Christ is the source, founder and ideal model of the religious life.”<sup>96</sup> It also extends the presence of Christ in this world. By this imitation, the religious, through community life, bears testimony to the heavenly life.<sup>97</sup>

### 2.2.5. Religious Life is Realization of God

The culmination of religious life according to Mar Ivanios is one’s union with God. In his own words, the ultimate end of religious life is realization of God.<sup>98</sup> “One cannot aim at something better than realization of God in this world which is the abode of moths and worms.”<sup>99</sup> According to Mar Ivanios, there is no dichotomy between serving God and the realization of God. But he stresses that only a person who has realized the love of God and who is united with God can serve God and human beings in a committed way.<sup>100</sup> This is well expressed through his famous saying, ‘realization of God is better than serving God.’<sup>101</sup> The holiness of the person enables him to do well, though both are complementary, says Mar Ivanios. Only holy persons can do good and good things alone cannot make one holy. “Only from virtuous people virtues evolve.”<sup>102</sup>

Mar Ivanios vision of service is not something external but something internal and an over flow of the experience of the realization of God. It is the outcome of one’s own holiness.

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<sup>94</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 62

<sup>95</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 62

<sup>96</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 16

<sup>97</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No. 3

<sup>98</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

<sup>99</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

<sup>100</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 59

<sup>101</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 61

<sup>102</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60



“People come naturally to relax under a tree with a lot of branches and leaves, when they are exhausted with the heat of the sun.”<sup>103</sup>

Religious life is a call to “be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48) Mar Ivanios beautifully presents this state of the religious.

He burns with love. He breathes the holiness and excellent nobility of God into himself as he breaths air into him. His external behaviour is common and ordinary. His internal disposition and virtuous act becomes lofty and perfect. He seems to be simple and humble on his external acts. In his journey to holiness Jesus Christ alone becomes his way, light and power...His body becomes the temple of God, his heart the throne of God, his mind the humble servant of God. His love becomes his success and in his love, he sacrifices his freedom, mind, tastes, favours, glory, health and all his life. He does all these things with calmness and peace, heartfelt joy and a love that transcends death.<sup>104</sup>

According to Mar Ivanios, God alone becomes the law of life and joy of the religious and a religious who leads a transformed life in God.<sup>105</sup> “Religious life on earth is a life in the resurrected Christ. It is a glorified human life.”<sup>106</sup> A religious strongly believes that this cannot be achieved by human efforts but through the grace of God.<sup>107</sup> So he simply gives himself into the hands of his master, Jesus Christ.

## 2.2.6. Indigenous Nature – An Essential Nature of Religious Life

Mar Ivanios firmly believed that religious life must have an indigenous nature. Since a religious not only aims at one's own perfection but also of others, religious life needs to have a

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<sup>103</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60

<sup>104</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 63

<sup>105</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 126

<sup>106</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 108

<sup>107</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Sanyāsa Jīvitha Sahāyi*, 108

witnessing nature, and one's life style needs to be in conformity with the life style of the people with whom one lives. Mar Ivanios gives a model of it through the establishment of Bethany Ashram, an indigenous religious house, where he integrated the religious values of Christianity with that of Hinduism. Years later, the Second Vatican Council confirmed this as the policy of the Catholic Church. It says, "... the religious institutes should strive to give them expression and to hand them on in a manner in keeping with the character and outlook of each nation. They should carefully consider how traditions of asceticism and contemplation, the needs of which have been sown by God in certain ancient cultures before the preaching of the Gospel, might be incorporated into Christian religious life." (AG 18) According to Mar Ivanios, religious life that imitates Jesus Christ in an indigenous way in India means "to imbibe and safeguard the inner spirit and life style of Indian spiritual traditions in order that the rich Indian culture and Sanyasa which tends to union with God might be made perfect in Christ."<sup>108</sup> When he speaks of the dress of his religious congregation he clearly exposes his vision.

.... Religious is a person who has his mission among gentiles and so his dress should be suitable to the context, which should evoke religiosity in them. The dress should be such that it must remind the religious and others that he is a religiously committed person. It must suit the culture of the country. No one should label it as foreign. When others see the dress, it must not evoke contempt but needs to evoke an affinity to come closer to the religious and listen to the Good News of Jesus Christ.<sup>109</sup>

He also exhorts the religious that they should not only follow the external characteristics of the culture but also imbibe the spirit and richness of it.

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<sup>108</sup> *The Holy Rule*, No. 4 b

<sup>109</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*. 150

### 2.3. Originality of Mar Ivanios' Vision

Mar Ivanios was such a visionary that he was a pioneer in many things in the Malankara Orthodox Church as well as the Catholic Church. He gave a new impetus through his ideas on liturgy, spirituality and inculturation. He was a man of integration. He integrated work with prayer, Indian monasticism with Christian monasticism, Indian culture with western culture. The foundation of Bethany Ashram was a clear example for this. "He adapted many customs and practices of Hindu monks. Thus he became the founder of a Christian monastic life that was in true harmony with Christian principles and at the same time bearing the true stamp of Indian culture."<sup>110</sup> The importance is that then when he founded a religious congregation in the Malankara Orthodox Church, with vegetarianism, saffron clothes and wooden cross, it was a new venture. The inculturation he spoke of was scarcely discussed in the Catholic Church. About thirty years before the Second Vatican Council, he translated the liturgy into the local language<sup>111</sup> and pioneered the inculturation of the liturgy, and spoke of a Church rooted in indigenous culture. He said, "We must prove that the Christian religion is not foreign to India."<sup>112</sup>

### 3. Mar Ivanios - A Proactive Mystic

According to Origen's mystical theology, the beauty of the human soul consists in being created in the image of God and there exists a kinship between the human mind and God. Mystical life is the ascent of the soul to God, an unending journey leading us to the greater realization of God's ultimate mystery. The life and teachings of early Christian mystics show that mysticism is not something apart from life and the concerns of the world. On the contrary, the mystical and moral go always together, action and contemplation interact with each other. Christian mystics share certain characteristics, but they are all very different as individuals who lived in different times and places. Christian

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<sup>110</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 126

<sup>111</sup> MARIADAS, *Oru Jivitha darsanathinte Kānāpurangal*, 7

<sup>112</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 126



mystics possess the power to transform themselves and the world around them by following the way of loving union with God, which is expressed through the compassionate and self-forgetting love for God and others.

Proactive mystics are ascetics and religious. However, they were also people of their time, who shaped the Church, influenced political and economic events, and got involved with the agonies, pain and longings of their contemporaries. Mar Ivanios, a great mystic of the twentieth century is a shining example of a proactive mystic. The strength of his life was that he could integrate contemplation with action. The task of contemplation, for him, was one of self-emptying, so that God could take full possession of his being. The task of action, for him, was that of proclaiming the Good News, and thereby realizing the kingdom of God. Thus he was not only a mystic but also a proactive mystic.

### 3.1. Christian Mysticism

For many Christian mystics of the past, mysticism was a combination of an inner and outer quest, a journey that led them deeply into the divine centre of their own souls, but then moved outward again to the concerns of God's created world and those of suffering humanity. Mysticism is a passionate love affair between God and human beings. It speaks of a deep yearning, of a burning desire for the contemplation in divine life, communion and union with God. This yearning is kindled by the fire of divine love itself, which moves the mystics in their search, and leads them to discover and proclaim the all encompassing love of God for humankind.<sup>113</sup> They offer a message of wholeness that includes struggles, promise of healing, harmony, peace and joy, which has a touch of perfection of their goal in God.

Though some mystical experience will not exhibit all attributes, the mystical life is the mysterious life of grace of Jesus Christ in faithful souls, who tend to themselves, live hidden with Him in God. They journey to perfection by the ordinary paths of

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<sup>113</sup> KING, *Christian Mystics*, 4

laborious meditation on the divine mysteries, mortification of the passions, and the methodological exercise of the virtues and pious practices. “The mystical life is the mysterious life of the grace of Jesus Christ in faithful souls who, dead to themselves, live hidden with Him in God. More properly it is the interior life which just souls experience when, animated and possessed by the spirit of Jesus Christ, they receive more and more perfectly and some times clearly perceive, his divine impulses, delightful or painful, whereby they grow in union and conformity with Him who is their Head until they become transformed in Him.”<sup>114</sup>

According to Walter Holden, mysticism is not necessarily exotic or eccentric. Instead, it denotes a fundamental way of being human.<sup>115</sup> It can be a withdrawal from everything external to sink within oneself to receive inner divine illumination. According to St. Teresa of Avila, in mystical experience “the soul is completely suspended in such a way that it seems to be completely outside itself. The will loves; the memory... is almost lost; the intellect does not work discursively...but it is not lost... it is as though amazed by all it understands because God desires that it understands, with regard to the things His majesty represents to it, that it understand nothing.”<sup>116</sup> According to William Johnston, “mysticism is the core of authentic religious experience. It is the wisdom or knowledge that is found through love.”<sup>117</sup>

### 3.2. The Characteristic Features of Christian Mysticism

To understand mysticism in its proper sense, one should know the principal features of mystical experience. Then only one can distinguish “mystical” experience from other types of experiences. So, here we try to have a bird’s eye view of the characteristic features of Christian mysticism by three classical and eminent scholars of mysticism, namely, William James, a

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<sup>114</sup> ARINTERO, *The Mystical Evolution*, 17

<sup>115</sup> HOLDEN-RIGHT, *Silent Fire*, 1

<sup>116</sup> KAVANAUGH-RODRIGUEZ, *St. Teresa of Avila*, 74

<sup>117</sup> EGAN, *Christian Mysticism*, 5

secular scholar, Nicholas Arseniev, an Eastern theologian and Evelyn Underhill, a Western writer.

### 3.2.1. William James

William James gives four characteristics of mysticism. 1) Ineffability: By this, William James meant the impossibility of expressing a state of mind by means of words and concepts. It must be directly experienced. 2) Neotic quality: They are illuminations, revelations. "They are states of insights into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect."<sup>118</sup> 3) Transiency: This speaks of the inconstancy of the mystical experience. "Mystical states cannot be sustained for long."<sup>119</sup> According to James, they fade away after sometime and the ordinary consciousness and experience once again take command of the person. 4) Passivity: It articulates the passivity of the mind and suspension of the will, which is being replaced by a superior reality.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.2.2. Nicholas Arseniev

Though mysticism is frequently considered as a realm inaccessible to understand, as an unalterable mystery, a hidden depth, to be lived rather than known, in the eastern tradition, there has been no sharp distinction between mysticism and theology, between personal experience of the divine mysteries and the dogma affirmed by the church.<sup>121</sup> "In contrast to the mechanistic Western view, the Eastern view of the world is 'organic'. For the Eastern mystic, all things and events perceived by the senses are inter related, connected, and are but different aspects or manifestations of the same ultimate reality"<sup>122</sup>. According to Arseniev, the foundation of mysticism is the resurrection of the lord Jesus Christ because as Gregory of Nyssa says "our nature by

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<sup>118</sup> JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 300

<sup>119</sup> JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 300

<sup>120</sup> JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 300

<sup>121</sup> LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 8

<sup>122</sup> CAPRA, *The Tao of Physics*, 29



union with God may become divine, as loosed from death and freed from subservience to the enemy; for his resurrection from the dead is for mortal mankind a beginning of the resurrection unto eternal life.”<sup>123</sup> According to him, what transforms one to divine life is one’s participation in the sacrament of Eucharist, where one feels the presence of the Lord and is united with him. In Arseniev’s outlook, in the process of mysticism one undergoes 1) An experience of divine darkness: The movement of the individual soul towards enlightenment begins in darkness of sin.<sup>124</sup> One feels life as a painful reality, a world of suffering and tribulation. However, one experiences a nearness to the divine reality, Christ, through these suffering. A mystic firmly believes that “through Him suffering has been transfigured, sanctified, though not abolished, it has become participation in His sufferings and His struggle.”<sup>125</sup> 2) A transformation of life and of the World: When the soul of the mystics lifted up by the inward joy, he becomes able to see everything with new eyes. In his mystical experiences, a mystic wholly sinks in to the love of God and sees in every creature, the goodness of God. The beauty of the creation leads one to the beauty of the creator.<sup>126</sup> 3) A deep inward joy: According to Arseniev, through constant prayers and after much striving and seeking, the soul touches the abundant fullness and is flooded with joy, while the whole person is spiritualised.<sup>127</sup> “The soul feels itself possessed of immeasurable riches, it trembles with silent singing or is swept away by ‘inward’ jubilant ‘singing’.”<sup>128</sup>

### 3.2.3 Evelyn Underhill

E. Underhill gives five significant characteristics of authentic mysticism. She points out these characteristics because she found out that many of the formulation of the characteristics of the

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<sup>123</sup> ARSENIIEV, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, 148

<sup>124</sup> MALONY, *The Breath of the Mystic*, 74

<sup>125</sup> ARSENIIEV, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, 75

<sup>126</sup> ARSENIIEV, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, 96-97

<sup>127</sup> ARSENIIEV, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, 65

<sup>128</sup> ARSENIIEV, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, 63

mystics, by many authors, are not adequate to explain the phenomena of mysticism realistically.<sup>129</sup>

- 1) **Mysticism is practical not theoretical:** Mystics describe their way of life as a battle, a pilgrimage, a quest, a search or a lonely adventure. According to Underhill, mysticism is an organic life process, something which the whole self does.<sup>130</sup> Mystics are interested in the experiential knowledge of God that transforms the way they are. Mystics are not persons of speculation but men of actions.
- 2) **Mysticism, a totally spiritual and transcendental activity:** The authentic mystic is not interested in controlling this world. Once he has surrendered his primary desires to God, he becomes a potent force for improving the world. While he is interested in increasing his spiritual life, virtues, happiness or knowledge, he will spend himself ceaselessly and tirelessly for other men and act as the agent of eternal goodness. "All things are gathered together in one with the divine sweetness and the man's being is so penetrated with the divine substance that he loses himself therein, as a drop of water is lost in a cask of strong wine."<sup>131</sup>
- 3) **The business and method of mysticism is love:** Mysticism is the science of hearts, which concentrates on God as Beloved. Love is the most distinctive note of true mysticism, and one that differentiates mysticism from all other transcendental theories.<sup>132</sup> The Love of mystics is to be understood in its deepest, fullest sense: it is the ultimate expression of the self's most vital tendencies.<sup>133</sup>
- 4) **The object of mysticism is union with God:** The spiritual desires of the mystics are useless unless they

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<sup>129</sup> UNDERHILL, *Mysticism*, 96

<sup>130</sup> UNDERHILL, *Mysticism*, 96

<sup>131</sup> UNDERHILL, *Mysticism*, 100

<sup>132</sup> EGAN, *Christian Mysticism*, 10

<sup>133</sup> UNDERHILL, *Mysticism*, 101

involve the movement of the whole self towards the Real.<sup>134</sup> The vital union with the God of love redirects or kills all lesser relationships and transforms the self for living ever-richer levels of life.

- 5) **The authentic mystic is never self-seeking:** The life of the mystic is neither consumed with self-interest nor looking for personal happiness. But he demands the most radical form humanly possible of self-forgetting, self-transcending, and self-surrendering to the all-consuming mysteries of life.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.3. Mar Ivanios - A Mystic

Though many of the above mentioned definitions and characteristics go along with the life of Mar Ivanios, his life matches most with the definition of Evelyn Underhill. Therefore, on the basis of above mentioned qualities and characteristics given by Underhill, let us analyse how these qualities of a mystic harmonize with the mystical life of Mar Ivanios, in comparison with some of the prominent mystics.

Mar Ivanios was not a man of speculations but a man of action. He transformed the world not merely through his beautiful and suggestive expressions of words but through his very life. Along with the great mystics who had tried monastic renewal, Mar Ivanios demonstrated to the world that the religious institutions play an important role in the contemporary religious, social and cultural circles, through his life. In this aspect he can be compared with great mystics like Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Catherine of Sienna, Thomas Merton, etc... Teresa of Avila deeply desired to reform the monastic life and willed to restore the original conditions of austerity. She believed that the ultimate goal of human life is the vision of God. Mar Ivanios, with his burning desire to reform and restore the original purity of his Church dedicated his whole life for it, and founded Bethany Ashram as a

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<sup>134</sup> UNDERHILL, *Mysticism*, 107

<sup>135</sup> EGAN, *Christian Mysticism*, 11



means for the realization of his vision. Like Teresa of Avila, for the realization of his goal, he founded also a congregation for women and desired for a 'Third Order', for the laity.<sup>136</sup> Like the great mystic Catherine of Sienna, Mar Ivanios' religious activities were of public nature. After Catherine's famous mystical marriage to Christ, she devoted herself to a more active life, attending especially to the needs of the sick and the poor. She dedicated her public ministry also as a peacemaker in the troubled seas of Italian political life. Like Catherine, Mar Ivanios' efforts were directed towards finding peace and spiritual uplift of his Church. "Long and painful litigations in the civil courts plagued the whole Malankara Church and this chaotic situation agitated his conscience. The spiritual apathy into which his Church has fallen was a source of great anguish for him."<sup>137</sup> He took an extraordinary vow to dedicate himself for the renewal and re-evangelisation of his community. "It is only the uplifting power of a great ideal that can save any community. To show forth this ideal is, I believe, my vocation now."<sup>138</sup>

Mar Ivanios was always in search of God, the transcendent reality. In his search of the 'Ultimate Reality', he had gone through different paths. First, he thought knowledge and education could lead man to his goal. In this process, like Bernard, who became one of the most powerful personages in Christendom, Mar Ivanios had also become one of the most powerful persons of the Orthodox Church and later of the Catholic Church too. He became popular in different nations not only as a pioneer of the Communion movement in India but also as a visionary, a man of spirituality and an able administrator. Through his speeches Bernard became popular as 'the conscience of all Europe', and Mar Ivanios as the *Kūdāsa Semmāsan* (Deacon of Sacraments). But later he found that knowledge alone could not save men, and he searched for an alternative means. Like John of the Cross, Mar Ivanios also experienced the 'Dark Night of the Soul' that one's soul travels through darkness without clear vision, in a state of

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<sup>136</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 83

<sup>137</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 76

<sup>138</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 67

uncertainty. This we can see in Mar Ivanios' life, especially in the days of his search to find a solution to the problems of his Church. He said "My mind falters and I am confused with the concept of missionary activity because I was not yet given the confirmation by God that they may be successful... and the only thing remains in me was the searching of His will and His revelations."<sup>139</sup> However, after attaining the 'True Wisdom', he abandoned everything and embraced simplicity and humility, in search of God, the Ultimate Reality. Similar to Ignatius of Loyola, Mar Ivanios also could contemplate on the action and passion of Christ even in the midst of activity. He kept long hours of vigil in true chivalric fashion before the Blessed Sacrament. He was being involved in the spirit of the Lord while he was engaged in other activities. "While imitating Christ in his interior life by prayer and penance, Mar Ivanios occupied his inner self with a continued contemplation of the action and the passion of Christ. By an inner dwelling of His passion, he became inflamed with the fire of divine love."<sup>140</sup>

As a true religious, Mar Ivanios' greatest desire was the realization of God, a true union with God. According to Mar Ivanios, "The desire to be united with God is a natural instinct of human beings."<sup>141</sup> For him, the worship of God is a state of union with God. He also had mystical experience like many mystics. He speaks about it in his autobiography, "Since I presented myself as a clay before God, I feel transformed in my heart with new principles and values. It got new shape with beautiful visions... I am fully confident in his ways... And therefore I bequeath my heart, which was free till now, before God and sit aside with dispassionate waiting."<sup>142</sup> "I feel God is calling me to offer myself... He is pressing me to sacrifice myself. He invites me to leap into the great ocean of His love."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60

<sup>140</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 78

<sup>141</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 53

<sup>142</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60

<sup>143</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, 69; INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - I*, 408

He was never a selfish person but a true mystic who burned out the candles of his life for the love of God and others. “He was a messenger of peace and loved all those who came in contact with him.”<sup>144</sup> Like Francis of Assisi, he abandoned everything and created a cosmic consciousness in which he could see his Lord Jesus Christ even in the little ones. Margaret Gibbons explains one incident, which affirms this.

Then there where his visits to the sick of the Calcutta slums...were babies suffering from malnutrition was to be found. He would wash the smelly little bodies, bath them in oil and give them back soothed and refreshed to their poor mothers. Moreover, in ruthless efforts after self-conquest he would force himself to kiss the scrofulous eruptions that disfigured the burning skin of those pitiful little ones before he applied the salves he had brought with him.<sup>145</sup>

### 3.4. Mar Ivanios – A Proactive Mystic

We found that Mar Ivanios was a mystic. In order to comprehend him fully, we need to investigate what kind of a mystic he was. We know that there are passive mystics- those who withdraw from the world, and active ones- those who are led back into the world and become immersed in its activities. However, Mar Ivanios was neither a passive nor an active mystic, but a proactive mystic who integrated harmoniously prayer and action.

#### 3.4.1. A Proactive Mystic

A proactive person is one who is realistic, self conscious and creatively active. He is more than one who takes initiatives. He thinks that one's behaviour is a product of one's own conscious choice based on values and not a product of circumstances. A proactive individual is self-conscious of his weakness and strength. “Proactive people are driven by values. Proactive people are still influenced by external stimuli, whether physical, social or

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<sup>144</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The spirituality of Mar Ivanios*, 82-

<sup>145</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 51



psychological. But their response to the stimuli, conscious or unconscious, is a value-based choice or response.”<sup>146</sup> They believe that their basic nature is to act and so they take initiative and look for alternatives. They choose a different approach to life by controlling their passions, emotions and feelings. Love becomes their highest value and they actualise it in their actions. They make calculated commitments and try to realize them in its entirety.

A proactive mystic is always an enlightened person: a mystic and at the same time a proactive person. Proactive mystics always seek the physical welfare and spiritual salvation of the whole humanity and commit their life for it. A proactive mystic is one who integrates his own visions with the mission of God, entrusted to him. He is no more goaded by his own selfish interests; he always seeks the will of God by his total surrender to God. He dedicates his whole life for the fulfilment of his new vocation, that is, the realization of the Kingdom of God. He lives like a prophet who has encountered God and is entrusted with a mission. We can see St. Paul as the model of a proactive mystic. He had an encounter with God and was transformed into another person. In his passionate desire to die for ‘the Truth’ he had encountered, he abandoned every thing and embraced Jesus Christ whom he considered as his ‘treasure’. He was fully active and at the same time contemplative. He summarizes his life thus: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” (Gal 2:20) A proactive mystic lives on a level of cosmic consciousness where he is not only conscious about himself and others, but also conscious of the cosmos.

### **3.5. Mar Ivanios and His Mystic Qualities as a Proactive Mystic**

In the light of the qualities discussed above, let us now explore the qualities of Mar Ivanios as a proactive mystic. He was creatively active in the world and his strength was the grace of God. He was inspired by the love of God and humans. His aim

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<sup>146</sup> COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 72

was the realization of the kingdom of God through a union with God.

### 3.5.1. A Man of Burning Desire

Mar Ivanios was a man who had strong convictions and clear visions about his life and the humanity. From his childhood onwards, he had a burning desire to be a religious and to follow Jesus Christ perfectly.<sup>147</sup> He always desired to be united with God. He also had a passionate desire to revive and renew his Church. The contradiction between the true spirit of Christianity and the real situation of the Church, which existed in his time, evoked in him an ardent desire to reform his Church and the society. “Mar Ivanios’ unending love was evidently the primary cause of all the successes he had throughout his life.... If he was ready to sacrifice everything - honour, wealth, even the Church which nurtured him, it was because of his burning love towards God.”<sup>148</sup> During his seminary formation, he took an extraordinary vow of dedicating himself for his community. “I vow to dedicate my life to the spiritual uplift of the community that gave me birth.”<sup>149</sup> After receiving the diaconate, he organized mission circles along with his fellow deacons in which they preached and discussed Christian doctrines and conducted discourses on sacred scripture and liturgy, and prepared sermons and instructions for the laity. One lay person said about this discourse as “The Malayalam address came down on our head like tongues of fire, the mien, gesture, the torrential eloquence in chaste and pure Malayalam – the picture stands out in my memory after the lapse of two decades.”<sup>150</sup> The establishment of the Catholicate and a religious ashram, Bethany Ashram in the Malankara Orthodox Church, later the crowning of his endeavours for the communion of the Malankara Church with the Universal Church are only a few examples of the results of his visions and labour. Vigour and the vitality of his desires never ended until the end of his life. “The object of Christian

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<sup>147</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 5

<sup>148</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 69

<sup>149</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 30

<sup>150</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 34



benevolence, on which he was ready to pour out his heart in the season of his first fervour, remained with him – a haunting and unsatisfied desire - to the end.”<sup>151</sup>

### 3. 5. 2. A Man Who Encountered God and Entrusted with a Mission

In the beginning of his priesthood, Mar Ivanios was living like a man who had found the meaning of his life. In the course of time he found that the meaning of life was not something we discover in ourselves, or in our lives. The true meaning has to be ‘revealed’ by God. Mar Ivanios was prayerfully thinking about his mission and the ways and means for uplifting his community in the light of Gospel values.<sup>152</sup> First he thought of edifying his community through educated priests. Then he thought of organising a group of missionaries. However, God entrusted him with a different mission. In his autobiography, he narrates his struggles, God experiences, and his transformation in his encounter with God. “I surrendered all these matters fully to the will of God, and I waited for the revelation of his will.”<sup>153</sup> He continues, “The grace of God led me to the will of God that what is needed is a religious congregation of dedicated people who willingly surrender their life to God. Therefore, I surrendered the rest of my life for it and confirmed it as my life principle. I admired this life principle, which I received from God through months of reflections and prayers, as a great treasure. And I searched the ways of its realization.”<sup>154</sup> After his encounter with God in prayer, he was transformed into a new person whose initial character of mind, which seems to have been ardent, earnest and aspiring, had changed all on a sudden into a man of peace and prayer. “... The once fastidious *M.A. Achan* of the M.D. Seminary who must have his garments tailored in Madras, now transformed into a humble monk who is foremost in the farmyard shovelling up

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<sup>151</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 49

<sup>152</sup> CHEDIATH, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 116

<sup>153</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60

<sup>154</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 62



manure, not caring for the stains.”<sup>155</sup> By realizing the barrenness of earthly life and its pleasures, he totally surrendered himself to God to work for his new mission, which was entrusted to him by God. “In all these stages, he, though engaged in different levels of activities, was guided by a supreme goal, which was nothing but the desire for communion with God, a union with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. For he says that there is nothing more sublime than union with God in this valley of tears.”<sup>156</sup>

### 3.5.3. A Man of Mystical Experience and Mystical Thoughts

We have seen that the guiding principle of a proactive mystic is the burning desire for the grace of God. He always wishes to be in loving union with God. It overflows in his prayers and thought. In the life and prayers of Mar Ivanios we see the same. He speaks about his mystical experience: “I felt that my mind is taken away by a heavenly spirit, to the thoughts of missionary activities. I couldn’t rebel against it, but let it free and watched with patience and prayers its movements and its stay.”<sup>157</sup> In the thoughts and prayers of Mar Ivanios we see a real mystic. His writings are rich and splendid with these mystical experiences and prayers. He prays, “Oh God, I have sinned, I am ready to suffer and die. I surrender my soul and life into your hands. I am ready to be a holocaust on the altar of Your love. Strike this offering, cut and sacrifice it. I plead to You for the strength to suffer for You.”<sup>158</sup> “Oh my Saviour, the time has come for my heart, which you built and is redeemed by your blood, to love you and to glow with a burning desire of devotion. Let it be with your control without being able to take it away... Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, my heart receives you. I desire to fulfil the new life in my heart, which you started in the holy altar. Make my heart your loving instrument. Hold my sinful life with your holiness and offer it as a sacrifice.

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<sup>155</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 56

<sup>156</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 66-67

<sup>157</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 58

<sup>158</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 43

Now I surrender fully to you and don't let me to depart from you."<sup>159</sup>

Mar Ivanios' life is a supreme example of a mystic in action. In his maiden message after he was consecrated as the Bishop of Bethany, he says, "When people spit on our face, let us kiss them. When they curse us, let us bless them and pray to almighty God to pardon them."<sup>160</sup> He was aware of his sinfulness and had repentance and humility to ask pardon for his sins. In his last message, which was written to his people from his deathbed, he begged pardon of all. "I have made many mistakes in my life. Though it was with good intention, I have not done it with sufficient charity."<sup>161</sup> Sickness made him bed ridden for months. However, he bestowed his suffering in the hands of God. About his sickness he says, "I do earnestly praise the most compassionate Lord, with a heart overflowing with a deep sense of gratitude, for having granted me such a situation – this sick bed."<sup>162</sup> He continues, "This enables me to remember the faults and mistakes of my past life one by one, and to make a sincere contrition and get reconciliation."<sup>163</sup> The last days of his life were clear signs of his saintly and mystic life. He was such a holy person that he could foresee his death and could prepare for a good death. In preparation for his death, he blessed his tomb where he was supposed to be buried, and the incense that may be used for the burial.<sup>164</sup> In those days, he was fully immersed in a life of prayer. On his deathbed, he was deeply engaged in prayer and he entrusted some one to recite prayers for him throughout the days and said to him "even though I close my eyes and seem to be asleep, you should not stop but recite the ejaculatory prayer for me."<sup>165</sup> When he was sick and bedridden, he asked to fix a cross on his right side so he could meditate on the passion and death of

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<sup>159</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Dhyāna Kusumangal*, 130

<sup>160</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 180

<sup>161</sup> CHEDIATH, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 283

<sup>162</sup> CHEDIATH, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 277

<sup>163</sup> CHEDIATH, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 277

<sup>164</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 338-39

<sup>165</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 334

Jesus Christ. He offered his pain to Jesus Christ who suffered for the humanity.<sup>166</sup>

### 3.5. 4 A Man of Prayer and Action

Mar Ivanios, while being a mystic, was also active and reactive realistically to situations and persons. “Mar Ivanios’ life of prayer and action was modelled on the life of Jesus, who integrated both in a perfect way. He realized that the earthly life of Christ’s prayer and action are like the two sides of the same coin; complimenting each other. In Jesus he saw that His life of prayer led Him to action and life of action brought Him to prayer.”<sup>167</sup> Mar Ivanios was interested in the mission of Jesus Christ, the redemption of mankind. According to Mar Dionysius Vattasseril, “Fr. P.T. Geevarghese founded a religious congregation, Bethany Ashram, to bring rebirth and regeneration in the spiritual life and apostolic activity in his Church.”<sup>168</sup> Along with the monastery, he founded an orphanage with better requirements than that of the religious. He had deep faith and hope in God. We can cite many examples. Whenever they lacked something he always said, “now let us go pray,”<sup>169</sup> and his experience proved that God miraculously satisfied his needs. At his deathbed, he could see the enviable progress that the Communion Movement in Malankara made during the short span of time, which started with only a few people. It progressed with thousands of laity, with lot of schools, colleges, charitable institutions, hundreds of Churches, mission houses and a number of monasteries and convents.<sup>170</sup> Mar Ivanios’ active life was an out flow of his prayer life. In all throughout his life, we see this integration. He was never a passive contemplative or an activist who left out prayers but one who transferred God’s love into charitable activities and social and spiritual empowerment. From the days of his early education to his last

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<sup>166</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios – II*, 340

<sup>167</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 86

<sup>168</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 37

<sup>169</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 53

<sup>170</sup> CHEDIATH, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 280



days on his deathbed, he was reflecting and working for the betterment of his community.

The standing pride of the Malankara Jacobite Church, a social leader, a man acknowledged by the community, given to self-sacrifice, a courageous person who exerted immense effort to establish peace in the community.... a martyr through diverse loss and disgrace in the cause of welfare service, in these and many ways Archbishop Mar Ivanios was well known, not only to the 'Malayalees' but also to many a scholar in other countries, such as Bengal, Russia, England, Germany, America etc...<sup>171</sup>

### 3.5.5. A True Religious and a Prophet

Mar Ivanios can only be compared to the *Rishis* of India in his practice of prayer, meditation and ascetical life.<sup>172</sup> He was a true imitator of Jesus Christ. His religious life along with his followers with all its simplicity and austerity attracted many to the ashram. "The austere humble life of the monks first attracted the people of the neighbouring villages.... Soon people were flocking to Perunad in thousands to steep themselves in the deep spirituality they found there."<sup>173</sup> In the book "In His Master's Footsteps", we see many examples of Mar Ivanios ascetical life.

Abo held out the cane to the deacon who took it without understanding. Abo then untied the laces of his cassock and drew it over his head. Then turning his bare back to the deacon, he ordered him to beat him...He had to obey. He went on beating until he heard the order to stop. The weals stood out sharply on the bare back. Some of them were bleeding. The tiny drops of blood looked like rubies in the candlelight. The tip of the cane had split open.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 80-81

<sup>172</sup> INCHACKALODY, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios - II*, 56

<sup>173</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 57-58

<sup>174</sup> ABRAHAM, *In His Master's Footsteps*, 127-28

As part of asceticism and for earning daily bread, “he had undertaken the task of soliciting alms from door to door, reaching out a begging bowl like any Hindu mendicant.”<sup>175</sup> Mar Ivanios was a man of prayer. Many a time, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, he was deeply engaged and completely dissolved in meditation.<sup>176</sup> He was also a real prophet. We read in the book ‘*Mar Ivanios, the Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*’,

A good shepherd who presented himself as an angel of peace in an age beset by faction feuds and bitterness, facing ominous spiritual decline; a blessed soul which formulated an independent ascetic ministry on the lines of ancient Indian traditions: a farsighted visionary who focused on women’s education and spiritual well being; a master craftsman who chiselled out the noble reunion movement<sup>177</sup>

Along with his liturgical reforms like changing the liturgy into the local language,<sup>178</sup> he protested against the institutionalised evils in the society as well as in the Church. “The system in the Churches in Kerala was that women stood behind men in the Churches. He changed it and arranged women on the right side and men on the left. Thus he established equality of men and women in the Churches.”<sup>179</sup>

It was also his aim to improve the religious and social welfare of many thousands of depressed classes. To achieve this goal, he established mission centers in many places.... These depressed classes were poverty-stricken, ill-clad and living unclean lives in miserable huts..... Mar Ivanios and his companions made an earnest and sincere effort to improve the conditions of these truly unfortunate people. He was not satisfied with the mere preaching of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments. He went about visiting huts and conducting

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<sup>175</sup> GIBBONS, *Mar Ivanios*, 54

<sup>176</sup> MAR IVANIOS, *Girideepam*, 60

<sup>177</sup> ONAKKOOR, *Mar Ivanios, The Prophet of Ascetic Wisdom*, cover page.

<sup>178</sup> MARIADAS, *Oru Jivitha darsanathinte Kānāpurangal*, 7

<sup>179</sup> CHEDIATH, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 117

meetings. He visited the sick and brought medicine to them. Because of this, hundreds of low caste people- pulayas, kuravas and parayas, who were exploited by the rich- were brought to the baptismal font every year.<sup>180</sup>

## Conclusion

The essence of Mar Ivanios' vision was his vision on *sanyasa*, which he derived from his God experience. According to him the first perfect *sanyasi* is Jesus Christ and the life of a *Sanyasi* is nothing but imitation of Him. Therefore, Ivanios gave his congregation the name, "The Order of the Imitation of Christ." He was also convinced that it is the duty of the religious to lead others also to salvation, while he himself searches for his perfection. He believed that a religious house should be a house of consolation, a house of prayer and witness. So he gave the name Bethany to his ashram, which he founded. All these theological reflections show that his insights were original and he was a true visionary, genuine spiritual master, an inborn scholar and revolutionary endowed with the spirit of Christ.

We have been in search of the life of Mar Ivanios, the proactive mystic. We found that his religious life transformed his spiritual life and gave it the shape of a mystic. In order to understand his religious life and vision, we have gone through the Christian and Hindu understanding of religious life, which gave shape to his vision. In this study, we have realized that the ultimate end of religious life, whether it is in Christianity or in Hinduism, is the realization of God. Realization of God is not an easy task. Though God is the initiator and grace giver, one has the responsibility to respond to it properly. One should be open to receive the grace of God and nurture it throughout one's life. One should not be selfish but needs to have a detachment to all that separate one from the realization of one's goal. Thus, a religious

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<sup>180</sup> MOOLAVEETIL, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 83-84



becomes a renouncer and an ascetic. His inspiration and motivation is the love of God and human beings. He cannot be inactive or separate himself from the world, but must be in the world with the spirit of God and as a witness to the kingdom of God.

Mar Ivanios was the man who re-invented the richness and blessedness of the religious life in the Malankara Church. He gave a new face to the religious life by integrating the richness of the Indian traditions with the Christian principles. In his thoughts and life we not only see a monk who was a reformer or a theologian but also a prophet and a mystic.

Now we are in the Twenty First Century- a world of technology and knowledge, where consumerism and materialism are values of life. People search any means to gain glory, power, and pleasure. At this juncture religious life has a great role, which can revolutionize and regenerate the world. Here Mar Ivanios stands as a true religious, who had wealth, power and honour. But realizing the worthlessness of this world pleasure in this 'valley of tears', he renounced everything and surrendered himself before God. But he was never inactive towards the world. He was a *yogi* of '*Nishkamakarma*', who integrated prayer with action and converted his holiness into holy actions without having a selfish desire of its fruits. He was truly human and a holy visionary, who transformed the world. Thus, he stands as the icon of true religiosity- a proactive mystic, who realized his goal in this world.



## ABBREVIATIONS

- AAS - *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the Vatican gazette published varying number of times each year.
- c - canon
- CCC - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- CCEO - *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches.
- CD - *Christus Dominus*, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church.
- GCD - *General Catechetical Directory of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy*, in *Acta Apostolica Sedis* 64 (1972) 97-176.
- GS - *Gaudium et Spes*: The Pastoral Constitution, of Vatican II, on Church in the Modern World.
- LG - *Lumen gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.
- ND - J. Neuner - J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, TPI, Bangalore, 2001.
- OE - *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, The Decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches.
- SC - *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.
- UR - *Unitatis redintegratio*, The Decree on Ecumenism.





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# The Theological Visions of Mar Ivanios

“The vision of Mar Ivanios played a vital role in this twentieth century ecclesial movements for communion in the Church. It has set a paradigm of ecclesial communion. Hence it is important to understand in depth and detail the salient features and content of the vision of Mar Ivanios. This would serve as the foundation of theologising in the Malankara Catholic Church. It is a welcome development that such an interest is growing steadily... The attempt by Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC and his team to bring out the theological content of the vision of Mar Ivanios is praiseworthy and it is a contribution to theologising in the Malankara Church...”

(Most Rev. Cyril Mar Baselios OIC)

“It is half a century since the demise of Mar Ivanios. It is a decade since the demise of his successor Mar Gregorios. Both are the illustrious sons of the Malankara Catholic Church and of Bethany Ashram. Their visions and leadership nurtures the ancient apostolic Malankara Catholic Church today...”

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“In many aspects this book is one of the pioneering works of its kind. The research into the visions of Mar Ivanios is centred on sources, namely the written books of Mar Ivanios. Mar Ivanios is less known in this way. He is often known through his biographies... This book is a beginning in the right direction...”

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